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SOME PRINCIPLES

OF

LITERARY CRITICISM

BY

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PREFACE

The following chapters were first prepared for the college lecture room, and, although since rewritten, they doubtless still betray by a certain dull, didactic manner the place of their origin. While directing the work of college classes, I had often looked about for a book that should give a compendious statement of the essentials of literature and the grounds of critical estimate. Finding no such book, I essayed to make one. Two or three books on the subject — born, I judge, of the same want that produced this one — have indeed appeared since these lectures were first written; but their purpose and method are quite different from those I have had in mind. I have attempted neither to expound a philosophy of criticism nor to elaborate a critical method; but simply to state, as plainly as I might, some qualities that by common consent are to be found in all writing deserving to be called literature, and to lay down some fundamental principles that must be assumed in all sound critical judgments. I venture to hope

that such a book, though intended primarily for the student, may not be altogether without interest to the general reader.

A work which professes only the modest purpose of stating a few truths universally admitted can have but slender claims to originality. I have, however, acknowledged in the text my specific obligations to others whenever I have myself been aware of them. I should mention in particular that the chapter on the Imagination owes much to Ruskin's treatment of that faculty in the "Modern Painters"; and that the discussion of metrics, in the chapter on Poetry, follows in the main the late Sidney Lanier's theory of the analogy between music and verse.

My thanks are due to the accuracy and judgment of my colleague, Professor William E. Mead, who has kindly read the proofs of the book.

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CHAPTER FIRST

Definitions and Limitations

Criticism may be broadly and provisionally defined as the intelligent appreciation of any work of art, and by consequence the just estimate of its value and rank. Literary criticism is, of course, concerned only with literature; but the general nature of the functions of criticism is much the same whether the object criticised be literature, or painting, or sculpture, or music.

Taste is a word frequently occurring in critical discussion. Taste, in such discussion, means simply the power to appreciate any work of art. It is not a single faculty, but must imply the joint action of intellect and emotions. The word *appreciation*, as used in the above definition, may include the exercise of all powers which combine to receive the full effect of a work of art. This definition may also indicate that

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first duty of criticism is to appreciate, not to estimate; that any attempt to estimate or rank a work of art is only a secondary and less important function of criticism. The effort to grade authors in an ascending scale of merit, or to apply any comparative standard of excellence, is never very successful and never very wise. There are always such essential differences between great writers that it is idle to attempt to determine their comparative value. If anybody asks, which was the greater poet, Spenser or Milton, Shelley or Wordsworth, the proper answer is, Both. That is, each excels the other in some qualities, while there is not enough fundamental similarity in their work to afford proper basis of comparison. Every man can tell which he likes the better — which is quite another matter. But criticism can point out what qualities essential to greatness in literature each possessed, and can thus enable us to appreciate both the better.

The study of literary criticism, as thus broadly defined, might embrace not only all general principles by which we should judge a work of literature and all practical rules for applying these principles, but all collateral matters necessary to the intelligent comprehension of the work, and even any processes that would quicken and enlarge our powers of appreciation. But for our discussion the subject must be much more narrowly defined.

The limitations imposed upon it in the following

pages may perhaps best be indicated by noticing that there are three methods of approach to the study of any work of literature, and that literary criticism, as discussed in this book, *is concerned only with the third.*

1. *The Historical.*—Every national literature is an expression of the changing life of the nation that has produced it. For literature is one side of history; often, indeed, the most instructive side. It is a commonplace to say that a thorough knowledge of the history of any period involves a familiarity with the literature of that period. How can you understand the Elizabethan age, the spirit that underlay all its external life, inspired all its splendid achievements and made that history, unless you are familiar with Elizabethan literature? Or, to take perhaps a still better example, how can you appreciate the temper of the Queen Anne time, its ideals in politics, manners, morals,—how is it possible to be at home in that age at all, unless you are on terms of intimacy with Addison and Steele and Swift? And the converse of course is equally true. Any adequate criticism of a literature, or, as a rule, of any single work of literature, always necessitates a knowledge of the history of the age in which that literature was produced. This is obviously true of all that body of literature which grows directly out of contemporary history, such as political discussion, oratory, satire. And some of the noblest writing is of this kind. It would be

a most serious loss to cut out of English literature Dryden, and Butler, and Pope, and Swift, and Burke, and Carlyle. Yet most of the work of all these men, and of scores of others only little less eminent, was called out by current political events, and is hardly to be read intelligently without a knowledge of those events. And even more important is it to study from the historical point of view those books which mirror the spirit of an age without being so closely dependent upon its particular events. Take Spenser's *Faery Queen* for example. It is only a long, bright phantasmagoria, devoid of any higher moral charm, until we remember in what years it was a-writing and what deeds were a-doing then all over Europe. It is only when we can see that great struggle between an old faith and a new, that tremendous wrestle for the mastery of a new world, all mirrored in the poem, that we appreciate its highest literary charm. Similarly, we are constantly liable to misjudge individual authors in the most unfortunate way unless we consider their relation to their age, the opinions moral and political that were current then, the standards of judgment that prevailed, the sentiments of the age with which they were in accord, or against which, perhaps, they were in passionate revolt. Shelley, for instance, is quite unintelligible without an intimate knowledge of his political and historical surroundings. It is not merely that we cannot understand the import of

particular passages or poems; we cannot understand the habitual temper of the poet, or know how to make allowances. Much of his work, as well as many events of his life, if regarded apart from his age in the light of general principles, might seem almost monstrous.

Consider also that the general spirit of an age determines very largely not only the opinions and temper of a literature, but even its form. And here it is not meant merely that one age specially patronizes one great variety of literature above all others, as, for example, the Elizabethan age developed the drama and our age encourages the novel. That, indeed, is a very important fact, and much depends upon it. Suppose William Shakspere had been born a hundred and twenty-five years later, would he have been the greatest master in English literature? It seems extremely doubtful. His genius was preëminently dramatic; but he could hardly have won great renown as a dramatist in the condition of the drama during the age of Queen Anne. And it is altogether improbable that his genius, if diverted into any other form of expression, would have proved so wonderful. Or take an opposite case. Suppose Alexander Pope had been born in Shakspere's age? How could a man with so little imagination, largeness of mind or aggressive force of character, have gained lasting distinction in letters then? His acuteness and point, his delicate sense of phrase, his keenne tiric

vision, all his most characteristic gifts would then have found no field for exercise, or would have been wasted in petty euphuism. It is evident that some historic conditions are favorable to one type of genius and not to another, and that the type survives in permanent literary form which is best fitted to its environment. (But by the influence of an age upon literary form, is here meant more especially that subtler influence which demands neatness, method, point, in one age, and luxuriance, profusion, imagination, in another.) It is undeniable that the standard of literary form in the age of Anne, for instance, was very different from what it has been in the past fifty years. Compare Pope with Tennyson. Both were exquisite artists; the work of both is characterized by perfect finish; both were dissatisfied until they had given whatever they wrote the last perfecting touch. Yet how different their notions of artistic form. Such differences of standard are unquestionably due in large degree to differences in social and political condition, — due, that is, to influences which it is the work of the historian to consider. Historical criticism sees that in any given age certain virtues are greatly admired, certain faults hardly perceived; that as a result standards for the man of letters change more or less, and the estimate even of the great classics varies from age to age. And these variations historical criticism tries to account for, by showing their relation to con-

comitant changes in national character and conditions.

Furthermore it is matter of familiar observation that the character of literature is decided by the race that produces it, and that the same great historic movement may have very different effects upon different races. French literature is very unlike English literature in its ethical standards, its dominant emotions, its ideals of literary form. And these differences are largely owing to causes that the historical student can investigate. For instance, that sum of influences which we call the Renaissance resulted very differently in the literatures of France and of England. It seemed to produce a classic literature in one country and a romantic in the other. But why? Only the historical critic can tell us. It is not easy, doubtless, for *him* to tell us always; but any attempt to answer such a question without a thorough knowledge of historic conditions would be folly. He who can tell us why England had a Shakspere and France a Racine has read deeply into the influence of historic conditions upon national life.

Now from all these considerations it is evident that the historical method of approach to the study of literature is fruitful of the richest results, and, indeed, that the appreciation of literature which we have called criticism is not in the fullest sense possible without this historic method. Moreover, of late years certain scientific tendencies have

given a new impetus to this form of criticism. Convinced that the principle of evolution is operative in literature as well as in all other social phenomena, that literary product whether of the individual or of the nation is the resultant of those forces of inheritance and environment which give continuity to the life of society, the critic has been inclined to give too much rather than too little weight to the historical connections and antecedents of the work he studies. He has often undervalued that element of individuality in literature which cannot be analyzed or accounted for. Furthermore, it is to be noted that this method of study leads rather to an explanation than to an appreciation of any work of art. It sets the object of study in its due relations with other phenomena and brings it under the sweep of law, but it does not always help us to a direct perception of essential artistic qualities. Its results, in fact, are historical and scientific rather than critical. Literary criticism, then, in the narrow sense in which the term is used throughout the following chapters, is concerned with other than historical facts and relations; though in the endeavor to find and apply its principles it certainly needs a wide comparative study of examples.

2. The second mode of approach to any literary subject is the *Biographical* or *Personal*. A work of literature may be regarded not as illustrating the history or spirit of the time in which it was writ-

ten, but, more specifically, as a revelation of the personality of its author. Thus regarded, literature becomes the handmaid not, as just now, of history, but of biography. It is urged, therefore, that if we are endeavoring to appreciate thoroughly a book, a poem, we must first acquaint ourselves as far as we can with the life of its author. His book, it is said, comes out of his experience, and the more of that experience we can learn from any other source, the better we can understand his point of view, so much the better shall we appreciate his book. And to a certain extent this is obviously true. (The value of biographical knowledge as a requisite to literary appreciation may, however, easily be exaggerated.) It is natural to desire to know something of the life of any man whose book has interested us; but we are not to give undue weight to any personal considerations in our estimate of the book, nor allow our judgment to be biassed by our approval or disapproval of some other things the author has or has not done. It is notorious that contemporary criticism has often been determined largely by personal prejudice against the author. Much of the criticism, for example, upon Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Keats, in the early part of this century, was obviously inspired not by any discriminating opinion of their poetry, but by an obstinate prejudice, political or social, against the men ther[illegible]
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been dead a hundred years is sometimes unduly influenced by our estimate of their political or social or religious opinions. In one of his last essays, Matthew Arnold deplored the appearance of Dowden's *Life of Shelley*, on the ground that it gave needless prominence to certain events and associations in the life of Shelley which tend to lessen our just appreciation and enjoyment of his work.[1] Mr. Saintsbury may be cited as another critic who often — and I think sometimes too impatiently — protests against the introduction of much biographical matter into critical estimates. Speaking of Shakspere's sonnets, he says: —

"For my part I am unable to find the slightest interest or the most rudimentary importance in the questions whether the Mr. W. H. of the dedication was the Earl of Pembroke, and if so, whether he was also the object of the majority of the *Sonnets*; whether the 'dark lady,' the 'woman coloured ill,' was Miss Mary Fitton; whether the rival poet was Chapman. Very likely all these things are true: very likely not one of them is true. They are impossible of settlement, and if they were settled they would not in the slightest degree affect the poetical beauty and the human interest of the *Sonnets*."[2]

We may not go so far with Mr. Saintsbury, in this case, as to agree that certain knowledge on all

[1] "Critical Essays," Second Series, Shelley, pp. 206–207, 237–238.

[2] "History of Elizabethan Literature," p. 162.

the biography connected with the sonnets would not affect in the slightest degree their "human interest"; but it is unquestionable that too much or too intrusive knowledge, with reference to the mere externals of a man's life, may withdraw our attention from the essential qualities of his work. The author has the right, at all events, to be judged by his book; that is what he has given us. He says: "This I have done for the public; judge this. I did not pretend to offer my life for your criticism, but only such parts of it as I have put into my book." And it will always be found more just, as well as more generous, to judge a man's life by his book than to judge his book by his life.

(*Yet we may still admit that a certain amount of biographical study and interest is often essential to the most thorough appreciation of any work of literature.*) For the charm of all literature resides largely in the personality of the author — that indefinable quality, or rather combination and balance of qualities, by virtue of which he was himself, different from every other human being. Any good book will make you feel that, somehow. And it is certainly reasonable that we should seek to deepen our sense of this individuality of the author by acquainting ourselves with the deciding facts of his life. Frequently, also, the critical disapproval of certain qualities of an author's book may justify itself most conclusively by reference to the facts of his life. For instance, our feeling of the false

note in all Sterne's sentiment, its ungenuineness and sentimentality, is confirmed when we discover what a tissue of pious and whimpering frauds his life itself was. Or, as we read much of Byron's poetry, we should decide, I think, if we knew nothing of his life, that much of the verse has a hollow ring, that genuine passion and sorrow do not speak so; and our critical judgment is verified when we know the man, and see him posturing constantly, in every relation, for twenty years. More generally, it would seem idle to deny that biographical knowledge often helps us to reach the same point of view the author had when he wrote, and so to be in sympathy with him. A great writer, whatever be the source of his greatness, certainly takes some larger, more impressive views of life; he is deeply affected by some phases of human experience. That is, at all events, a part of his greatness. And we shall understand his work better if we can put ourselves, to some degree, in his place. Walter Scott was a man who was never his own hero, never worked up his own history into literary shape, never had anything to say of his own feeling or circumstances, — no writer is more thoroughly objective, — yet can any one deny that we enter more thoroughly into the spirit, both of his poetry and his fiction, after we have become familiar with his life? And if this is so with such an author as Scott, how much more true is it of such an author, let us say, as Samuel Johnson or

Charles Lamb. The work of a man like Lamb is in fact all autobiography, and nothing else. He is telling you himself—his humor, his pathos, his foibles; his own personality is the whole subject of his work. Thus our appreciation of him is doubled when we come to be familiarly acquainted with the facts of his life. Such writers, and they are often the most charming if not the greatest, we can never fully enjoy until we have put ourselves on terms of personal intimacy with them.

One legitimate mode of approach to literary study, then, is from the side of the author's personality. Yet this method, like the historical, is excluded by the restrictions placed upon the meaning of the term Literary Criticism in this volume.

3. There is a third method of study applied to any work of literature, which we may call more specifically the *Critical* or *Literary*. We may ask, What is the value and interest of this work in itself, as a piece of literature, quite apart from its connections with its age or its author? Wherein consists its power or charm? Why does it refuse to die?

Now questions of this kind, it will be seen, are for the most part unconnected with all biographical or historical relations and interests. We may ask them intelligently and in many cases answer them intelligently without knowing much about the age, and without knowing anything about the author. Indeed, some of the greatest specimens of literature are books with reference to which we cannot ask

any other questions than these, because we know little of the period in which they were written and nothing of the men who wrote them. (Homer, for instance. Homer's work, to be sure, may be studied with a view to get history out of it; but we have not much historic information to throw upon the poems themselves. Nor do we need it. They derive their interest mainly from universal considerations which are true and powerful in all ages. And much as we may wish to know the life of Shakspere, it may be questioned whether we really need to know much about it. Nor are we greatly helped to a comprehension of his work by a study of his age. It is true, as remarked in a former page, that Shakspere was dependent upon the habits and social customs of his time for those conditions most favorable to the exercise of his dramatic genius, and it is further true, doubtless, that he does in many respects exhibit the urgent, imaginative spirit of his age; but what is here insisted on is that the qualities by virtue of which he holds his preëminence are qualities not dependent on any age or circumstance. As Ben Jonson well said, "He was not of an age, but for all time." Something like this, in fact, is true of all great classics. They are not provincial in place or time. They are not dependent upon knowledge of the age or the author for appreciation. They may have been — in the deepest sense they were — inspired by their age; yet they are also in a sense inde-

pendent of it, and deal with those larger human ideas and relations that no time can antiquate. Homer, Dante, Shakspere, and to much less degree Milton, seem of no age, but of all ages.

Now it is when we approach a work of literature from this side, with a view to determine its essential qualities and value apart from all its particular external relations, that we find the field of Literary Criticism in the narrower, more precise sense in which it is here to be studied. We may say, then, that it is the function of Literary Criticism to determine the essential or intrinsic virtues of literature, and to discuss these virtues as they appear in various kinds of literature. As thus defined it includes all attempts to discover what are the qualities that constitute literature, whether qualities of matter, — as imagination, emotion, or qualities of manner, — as melody and all virtues of form. It covers all discussion of the relation of these qualities to each other, their relative importance, the ways in which they combine to produce literary effect. Criticism, thus conceived, is a science (though doubtless a very imperfect one), rather than an art; that is, it seeks to discover and state general principles rather than to give rules for their application in special cases. It is probable, indeed, that the latter meaning is the one most commonly suggested by the use of the word. The critic is thought of as one who judges in particular cases. But it would seem necessary that there must first be some

accepted principles upon which such judgment can be based. "The function of criticism," says Matthew Arnold, using the term *criticism* rather widely, is "to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." Yes, that is the ultimate function of criticism; but how are we to know what *is* best? Criticism may do well to point out first, if possible, some qualities to serve as tests or standards by which we may know the best.

Criticism, as here defined, might be regarded as a higher kind of Rhetoric. It differs from Rhetoric, however, chiefly in two respects. 1. Rhetoric is more exclusively an art. It aims to teach us how to do something, *i.e.* to write. Criticism, supposing the thing done, teaches us the principles by which we may appreciate and estimate it. 2. Rhetoric has to do, as is implied in the preceding statement, chiefly with form. Presupposing that a man has something to say, but not attempting to judge whether it is worth saying or not, Rhetoric teaches him how to say it. Criticism deals primarily with the matter, with what a man has to say, and the effect it is fitted to produce on the reader; and though it also discusses form or style, it considers that in a somewhat larger way than rhetoric does. It deals not so much with the structure of the sentence and paragraph or with any of the mechanics of style as with those more intangible though valuable qualities of style that arise from a subtle adaptation of expression to thought and emotion, and

those beauties that hardly submit themselves to the coarser analysis of rhetorical rule. The range of criticism is therefore wider than that of Rhetoric; but its principles are likely to be more vague than the rules of Rhetoric.

Literary Criticism has been defined in the preceding paragraphs as a science (though an imperfect one), because it seeks to discover certain qualities, common to all good literature, which may serve as tests and standards — in a word, a body of principles. But it is often objected that just this is impossible, and consequently that there is, and can be, no such thing as a science of criticism. This denial is based on several grounds, which we must briefly examine.

1. It is sometimes urged — though the objection is perhaps hardly of sufficient weight to deserve mention — that there is no rational appeal from individual taste, and hence no standard of judgment. If there be many different opinions on any work of art, there is no reason, in the nature of the case, for giving any one of them authority over the rest. In matters of fact there is an outward standard. If statements correspond to facts, they are "true"; if not, they are "false." But in matters of taste there cannot be any such outward standard If a thing pleases me, it does, — and there an end it is not therefore true or false, correct or incorrect great or small. A work of literature is designe

to please the reader: if it does please him, he will pronounce it excellent; if it pleases many, why, many will pronounce it excellent, and it will be popular. But there is no question of higher or lower involved, and all such verdicts in literature are arbitrary and irrational.

As to this objection, we need only say that it contradicts the general experience of mankind. There is a general tacit recognition of such a distinction as higher and lower in literature, and that where no moral interests are involved; and this distinction must imply some objective standard, however vague that standard may be and however difficult to define. The proverb *de gustibus non disputandum* only means that it is useless to *argue* with an individual on the decisions of his personal taste. If a man say that he likes *The Sweet By and By* better than he likes Beethoven's Ninth Symphony, it is of no use to argue with him about it. But it does not follow that there is no intelligible sense in which Beethoven's Symphony is better than *The Sweet By and By*. And if this man should be able to cite a hundred other men who honestly prefer the song to one who prefers the symphony, as he probably could, it would still be intelligible to say that the hundred preferred the lower thing, and the one the higher. *Why* that would be an intelligible and correct thing to say, we need not now decide — that question must be considered later; all it is necessary to note here

is, that by the general consent of men there is in matters of taste a higher and a lower, and that the difference between them is not determined by a majority vote. On such matters numbers do not count.

2. A more serious objection is found in the variations of taste among competent judges. The best critical verdicts of one race differ widely from those of another. Standards of taste within the same nation change greatly from age to age. More than this, within the same nation and at the same time, different critics equally well qualified, differ in their judgment radically. Mr. Arnold hardly will admit that Pope's work is poetry at all; Mr. Courthope declares it is poetry of the strictest, most classic variety One man admires the clear, animated, positive style of Macaulay; another man says it is hard, metallic, virtually untruthful, — the worst kind of style. Dr. Johnson not only said of the songs in *Comus* that they are intolerably harsh, — that might have been accounted for by his almost incredible deafness to melody in verse, — but he said of all Milton's minor poems, which he calls "trifles," that "if they differ from others they differ for the worse"; that in *Lycidas* "there is no nature, for there is no truth; there is no art, for there is nothing new"; that "one god asks another god what has become of Lycidas, and neither god can tell"; that it is all "easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting." And Johnson, though

he took care, perhaps, that the "Whig dogs" like Milton shouldn't "get the best of it," was on the whole a very creditably honest critic, telling what he genuinely thought, at first hand, for himself. And he was never a fool. Addison, who admired Milton well, if not very wisely, could say of the work of Milton's great predecessor, Spenser:—

> "But now the mystic tale that pleas'd of yore
> Can charm our understanding age no more."

And although this was a youthful verdict, there is no indication that Addison ever reversed it. The varying judgment on Shakspere since his death is matter of common knowledge. Such examples of radically different verdicts upon the same piece of literature by qualified critics, it is urged, could be *multiplied indefinitely*.

Consider, furthermore, the difference of opinion as to the validity of any particular law of structure, or the propriety of any given combination of emotional effects. Take the question of the unities in the drama — whether good taste is violated and dramatic effect lost by supposing the action of a drama to occupy more than one day, to go on in more than one place, or to include more than one main event. Whole generations of critics will be found insisting on all three, while others will praise Shakspere's freedom in caring nothing at all about the first two, and often straining the third very hard. Or that other question as to

the wisdom of combining diverse emotional effects, "mixing comic stuff with tragic sadness," as Milton contemptuously calls it, — putting a clown to jest over the grave of Ophelia, and another clown to jest as he bears the death-dealing asp to Cleopatra, or two clowns to jest at the heels of Macbeth's bloody deed — there has been much division of critic wits over this. Some critics have asserted that it is a gross violation of all the dictates of refined art; others, that it is a most pathetic effect, sanctioned by those laws of human nature which are the bases of art.

With such a diversity of taste among competent persons, it is argued that it is hopeless to attempt to lay down any principles, or prescribe any qualities presupposing agreement.

Now in answer to this objection, we may admit at once that this diversity of taste does limit the sphere of criticism somewhat. But it will be seen, on a moment's reflection, that the alleged diversity is not so wide as it seems. In fact, the diversity of taste among different races, ages, individuals, is much less than the agreement; at all events, the points of agreement, if not more numerous than the points of difference, are far more important. If that were not so, indeed, there could be no permanent literature. But consider that literature, or art in general, is the most abiding thing in the world. Everything else is antiquated, and superseded by the progress of civilization. A bright schoolboy

could set right the men of Homer's day on almost every department of objective knowledge; but Homer is as good as ever; he is not antiquated. And notice — for it is the special point now under consideration — that not only is the poem admired as truly now as then, but it is admired for the same qualities. Not, indeed, that our estimate of the poem is in all respects identical with that of the men of three thousand years ago, but the great essential grounds of literary appreciation were the same then as now. What was poetry to the men of Homer's day continues to be poetry to the men of our day. Here, then, is an essential uniformity of taste, which indicates that there must be some critical principles of universal and permanent application.

Furthermore, a little consideration will show that many divergences of taste are entirely consistent with deeper, underlying agreement. For instance, rules of literary structure are often handed down from age to age and accepted by a conservative temper long after the conditions which produced them have altered. The dramatic unities, above referred to, illustrate this. They were good for the Greek drama. Presupposing a certain effect to be aimed at in dramatic representation, they may have been helpful in producing that effect: but it does not follow either that they are valid when a different effect is aimed at, or that the effect of the Greek drama is the highest the dra-

matic art can produce. No artistic rules can be accepted as universal unless the conditions out of which they grew can be proved necessary and permanent. Of the unities, only one, the unity of subject, can be shown to be rooted in unchanging laws of taste, and only this one, therefore, is of universal obligation.

The difference in the verdicts which competent critics pronounce on a given work of art is largely *accounted for by the different relative weight* which they give to particular excellences. A certain quality will be admitted by all to be a virtue (and so there is agreement and a possibility of some principles of criticism), but that quality will seem a more important virtue to one critic than to the next. Literary criticism must certainly make allowance for such variety of preference, which is entirely consistent with more fundamental agreement. I may admire Browning's work more than Tennyson's, because I admire vigor and robustness both of thought and emotion more than I admire refinement, grace, and delicacy; but that is no reason why I should not appreciate both men intelligently. Mr. Arnold was not blind to Pope's clear insight, wit, terseness, point: he admits *all these* qualities to be virtues — "admirable and splendid" virtues he calls them: but he insists that they are not relatively *important* virtues *in poetry*. Very well; perhaps they are not. That depends on how you define poetry, and definition is mostly a matter of usage. Whether Pope's verse is what

Mr. Arnold calls poetry or not, is not so very important a question: it is important that we all should be able to appreciate Pope's verse, to understand and feel those qualities of universal interest that make it literature.

Two other arguments against the possibility of anything like a science of criticism are based, not on the diversity of opinion in the critic, but on the nature of literature itself.

3. It is said that the range of admitted literary effects is practically infinite, so that you cannot reduce them to law, or point out any qualities common to all writing that deserves to be called literature. Consider, it is urged, how numerous and how essentially different, often essentially opposite, are the qualities which any catholic taste recognizes in literature. For the question now is not the difficulty of agreement between different observers, but the difficulty of imposing any common description upon the almost infinite variety of attractions that literature has for one man. The man with breadth of literary appreciation will admire Ruskin's imaginative profusion, but he will also admire Arnold's chaste precision or the homely robustness of Swift. He will admire the romantic emotion of Shelley, but he will admire also the classic satire of Pope or the masculine common sense of Dryden. And he will insist that all these qualities are literary qualities; that the ten-line lyric, nay the very phrase, —

"I could not love thee, dear, so much
Loved I not honour more!"

is as truly literature as the epic, just as the engraved gem is as surely art as the colossal statue. The means by which writing gains literary recognition being thus so varied — sometimes by appeal to the intellect, sometimes to the emotions, sometimes by some indefinable grace or happy accident of form, some turn of phrase which makes a line as lasting as the pyramids, but which there is no recipe for and no possibility of explaining — these causes being so numerous and combining to produce such an infinite variety of effects, it is argued that there is no possibility of reducing them to a few classes or bringing them all under a few laws. If your laws and classes are few, they will be mere commonplaces; if they are numerous, you will soon find yourself in the endless task of trying to enumerate all the powers of intellect or susceptibilities of emotion to which literature makes appeal, without really doing anything to explain the nature of literature or to increase your appreciation of it. Literature is, in fact, the record of the whole life of man, and its sources of interest, therefore, are as many and as varied as those of the wide human life it represents. The function of criticism, then, should be to point out whatever is of interest in each individual specimen of literature, but not to talk about greater or less, or to attempt to set up any standards of measurement or even of

appreciation. Criticism — to use a figure often employed — is a sign-post to point out whatever in any particular work seems to the critic most interesting to himself, and so likely to be of interest to most other people; and the excellence of the criticism will depend entirely upon the intelligence and sympathy of the individual critic.

Now it may be admitted that this objection, like the previous one, imposes some limitations upon the attempt to lay down any principles of criticism; but surely it does not forbid that attempt altogether. The variety of literary effects is indeed almost infinite; but it does not follow that it is impossible to do anything toward such systematic discussion of them as shall help us to appreciate and estimate them. In fact, the moment we attempt to discriminate between literary qualities or estimate their value in any wise, we imply some standard by which they may be measured and classified. It would certainly be an endless task to make an exhaustive enumeration of all effects that literature produces and to arrange and classify them minutely. But it can hardly be hopeless to attempt to suggest some points at which all writings to be properly called literature are in agreement, and some qualities which whenever present are virtues. For instance, imagination may show itself in a thousand different shapes, but still it is in some shape or other always a requisite of poetry. And if so, any discussion of imagination, of its nature and modes of working,

ought to aid our appreciation of it wherever it appears.

4. But there is a fourth objection urged against the possibility of a scientific method in criticism which is more weighty than either of those mentioned. Literature, it is said, is the expression of individuality. In the last analysis, we are told, the power and charm of any work of literature depend upon that inexplicable thing we call personality or genius. And there is no prescription for genius. Lay down any rules or principles you please and you will find that of two books which alike seem to conform to them, one is good literature and the other isn't. And your criticism cannot tell why. You can only say, Here is genius and there is not: a living man is in this book and not in the other. For the very first requisite of marked personality, of course, is that it is unique, and so in strictness not to be defined or classified. Every work of literature really expressive of personality must, therefore, be a new creation. You cannot apply rules to it, because its very virtue resides largely in the fact that it is the expression of a unique personality. This objection has been well put by Mr. Saintsbury, —

"It is all but demonstrable that 'scientific' literary criticism is impossible unless the word 'scientific' is to have its meaning very illegitimately altered. For the essential qualities of literature, as of all art, are communicated by the individual, they

depend upon idiosyncrasy; and this makes science in any proper sense powerless. *She* can deal only with classes, only with general laws; and so long as these classes are constantly reduced to 'species of one,' and these laws are set at nought by incalculable and singular influences, she must be constantly baffled and find all her elaborate plant of formulas and generalizations useless. . . . You will find that on the showing of this science falsely so called, there is no reason why Chapelain should not be a poet, and none why Shakespeare is. You will ask science in vain to tell you why some dozen or sixteen of the simplest words in language arranged by one man or in one fashion, why a certain number of dabs of colour arranged by another man or in another fashion, make a permanent addition to the delight of the world, while other words and other dabs of colour, differently arranged by others, do not."[1]

All criticism of a scientific sort, it is said, *must* miss the essential quality we wish to get at. For all criticism according to method must proceed by similarities and conformities, and so must result at last only in showing us wherein one author resembles another author — that is, wherein they both, and all other great authors, have conformed to what you call principles of art. But this is not what we want to know. We do not care that the critic should tell

[1] "Essays in English Literature, 1780–1860." Introduction, p. xii.

us wherein Milton resembles Homer, and Vergil, and Dante; or point out that all take as their subject a single action, or a great action; that all preserve unity of plan with variety of incident, and what not. All this, it is urged, does not explain Milton to us. We wish rather to be made to feel what is essential and peculiar to Milton in the poem, that wherein he *differs* from others; we want to be made to taste the true Miltonic flavor of his work. This it is to appreciate Milton, and this the formal critic never can do for us.

Well, it may be granted at once that no kind of criticism can do *that* for us fully. If we wish to taste the full flavor of an author's personality, we must read his work ourselves; nobody can taste it for us But the objection proves too much. If good at all, it is good against all criticism except the expression of individual likes or dislikes, the criticism of personal impression. Much modern criticism, indeed, is of precisely that sort, purely empirical. The critic declares that he is pleased or is not pleased, and there an end. And if the critic have the gift of expression, pointed, or witty, or picturesque, such criticism may be very pleasant reading — that of Mr. Andrew Lang, for instance. Or, if he be a thoughtful man with insight and judgment, then his likes and dislikes will be very instructive whether he give any reasons for them or not. A good deal of Matthew Arnold's criticism was of this magisterial sort;

but it was always in the best sense masterly. Yet we feel that there ought to be some other basis for criticism than this. It is not enough for a man to say, "I approve this; I find undeniable but inexplicable genius here." We ask instinctively, "Yes, but *why* do you like it? What is the evidence of genius?" Even Mr. Saintsbury, in a paragraph following that just now quoted, objects to this kind of criticism,—

"The full and proper office of the critic can never be discharged except by those who remember that 'critic' means 'judge.' Expressions of personal liking, though they can hardly be kept out of criticism, are not by themselves judgment. The famous 'J'aime mieux Alfred de Musset,' though it came from a man of extraordinary mental power and no small specially critical ability, is not criticism. Mere *obiter dicta* of any kind, though they may be most agreeable and even most legitimate set-offs to critical conversation, are not criticism. . . . There must be at least some attempt to take and render the whole virtue of the subjects considered, some effort to compare them with their likes in other as well as the same languages, some endeavor to class and value them."[1]

But if it be true that the mere rendering of personal impressions is not criticism, if there must be some effort to "judge," then certainly there must

[1] "Essays in English Literature, 1780–1860." Introduction, p. xv.

be some standard of judgment; if there must be some attempt to "class and value," there must be some principles of classification and some measure of value. Indeed, you cannot attempt to describe the personal element in literature on which it is claimed its power depends, without having resort at every step to principles or qualities supposed to be understood. And although there will doubtless be in any work of genius outstanding qualities that defy analysis or classification, the attempt to criticise such a work in any way whatever must presuppose some general principles understood.

But while these objections do not preclude the possibility of a methodical criticism, it is well to recognize at the outset that, as already said, they do impose serious limitations upon it. There is an almost infinite range of literary effects; and there is an inexplicable quality in genius which manifests itself in unexpected ways, and will not be confined by any rules. The general principles of criticism must therefore be few and very simple. We cannot hope to lay down a large or a detailed body of rules which will prove to be of general application; and we should beware of any attempt to do so. Such rules are likely to be traditional, or the formulation of a merely temporary mood, or perhaps still more probably, only the deliverance of the individual taste of the critic. Even the best critics have not always escaped this danger of mistaking their own private judgment — sometimes their own

caprice — for unvarying law. But criticism is something more than individual preference, whether the critic be great or small; it ought to base itself on principles which, though few and elementary, are undisputed.

It is well to remember, furthermore, that the principles of criticism are not to be regarded as rules for creation. They are intended not so much for the artist himself as for those who would appreciate his work. You cannot say to the poet or novelist, "Go, do so and so, follow these rules and make a book." The best things in art are never wrought out merely by obedience to rule and formula. All rules and principles are derived from literature, not the literature from rules and principles.

Nor must it be thought that any critical principles can give us a short and easy method even of judging a work of art. For any work of art, most of all a great work of literature, is a very complex thing. It has a great variety of qualities, combined as they are not anywhere else. We cannot hope to appreciate or measure all these qualities by applying to it a few elementary principles. Moreover, it goes without saying that rules and principles, however valuable, are not the first essential in the equipment of the critic. They presuppose a certain sensitiveness and sympathy which may furnish the material for critical judgment. The critic must himself feel and see, before he can

judge. But rules and principles though they can never generate that sensitiveness to literary effects which is the first requisite of any appreciation, may be of service to us in guiding our sympathies, correcting the aberrations of taste, and bringing our spontaneous individual judgments into accord with that final good judgment which is permanent.

Perhaps it may not be amiss to remark by way of caution, before leaving this introductory chapter, that the discussion of such a subject as Literary Criticism can hardly claim to be always interesting. The critical temper is not so attractive as the imaginative or emotional; and the study of criticism must perforce forgo the charm that belongs to the study of literature itself. Much criticism is literature, to be sure; but then it is something more than criticism.

CHAPTER SECOND

WHAT IS LITERATURE?

IT was stated at the close of the previous chapter that the principles of criticism must be derived from a study of the literature itself; that a book is not literature because it conforms to certain rules, but rather that these rules are valid because they are drawn from admitted works of literature. Obviously, then, at the outset of our discussion, this question presents itself: What is the body of writings from which these rules and principles are drawn? What *is* literature? Moreover, if we can answer this question satisfactorily, we may find ourselves advanced some way in our discussion of these principles themselves. Since, if there be any discoverable essentials of literature as such, we shall be most likely to find all valuable critical principles, or laws, by considering carefully these essentials, their relative value, the conditions on which they depend, and the ways in which they are combined.

But here we meet a difficulty which constantly recurs in critical discussion, — the difficulty of giving accurate definition to words in common use with a wide and vague significance. Such words

as *literature*, as also, for other examples, *beauty*, *poetry*, *imagination*, *idealism*, are used by us all without any attempt to define for ourselves precisely what we mean by them. We find they designate accurately enough the most of the things associated with them in our thought, and we do not trouble ourselves if there be, so to speak, a ragged fringe on either side of the line of their meaning. It is only when we try to define such terms that we realize how vague and careless is our use of them. We find it difficult to make out with precision the limits of meaning we ourselves would assign to them; and when we have done that, we find our neighbor has assigned quite different ones; so that we are often driven to one of two or three makeshifts. We may give to such a word a signification so wide as to cover all its uses, but of little value because too vague to fix the essential quality that the word ought to signify; or we may give the word several meanings, showing, if we can, what they have in common; or we may arbitrarily fix on a meaning, and confine our own use to it, recognizing that others use the word in other senses. But the difficulty, in one form or another, besets all such discussions as we have before us.

If we go to the books for ready-made definitions of literature, we shall not easily find what we seek. Definitions enough, indeed, there are; but they prove to be only suggestive or descriptive. It would be easy to fill pages with them I will cite

but one passage, in which a prominent writer, who has the advantage of a judgment trained in practical affairs, asks this question: —

"What is literature? It has often been defined. Emerson says it is a record of the best thoughts. 'By literature,' says another author, — I think Mr. Stopford Brooke, — 'we mean the written thoughts and feelings of intelligent men and women arranged in a way that shall give pleasure to the reader.' A third account is that 'the aim of a student is to know the best that has been thought in the world.'[1] Definitions always appear to me, in these things, to be in the nature of vanity. I feel that the attempt to be compact in the definition of literature ends in something that is rather meagre, partial, starved, and unsatisfactory. I turn to the answer given by a great French writer to a question not quite the same, viz.: 'What is a classic?' Literature consists of a whole body of classics, in the true sense of the word, and a classic, as Sainte-Beuve defines him, is 'an author who has enriched the human mind, who has really added to its treasure, who has got it to take a step farther; who has discovered some unequivocal moral truth, or penetrated to some eternal passion, in that heart of man where it seemed as though all were known

[1] Mr. Morley is apparently quoting, but very inaccurately, from Matthew Arnold's essay, "The Function of Criticism." Mr. Arnold says it is the "business" — not of the student, but of *criticism* — "to know the best that is thought and known in the world."

and explored; who has produced his thought or his observation or his invention under some form, no matter what, so it be large, acute, and reasonable, sane, and beautiful in itself; who has spoken to all in a style of his own, yet a style which finds itself the style of everybody, — in a style that is at once new and antique, and is the contemporary of all the ages.'[1]' At a single hearing you may not take all that in; but if you should have any opportunity of recurring to it you will find this a satisfactory, full, and instructive account of what those who have thought most on literature hope to get from it, and most would desire to confer upon others by it. Literature consists of all the books — and they are not so many — where moral truth and human passion are touched with a certain largeness, sanity, and attraction of form."[2]

Any author who should meet all the requirements specified by Sainte-Beuve in this passage would certainly pass muster as a classic — indeed, it is probable that many acknowledged classics could hardly show so many credentials; but surely we must not restrict the term *literature* to the comparatively few books that are "classics" of this very high order. And even so, Mr. Morley's passage is a description of literature, not a definition. We certainly cannot "take it all in at a single hearing,"

[1] The essay from which Mr. Morley quotes may be found in the "Causeries du Lundi," III. (1850).
[2] John Morley, "On the Study of Literature."

and when we do take it in, we find that it is hardly compact or clear enough for a working definition.

But let us see if we cannot work toward such a conception of literature as will be accepted by every one, and at the same time shall designate the essential and distinguishing qualities of literature in a form compact and definite enough to be of real service. How do we most frequently use the word? We do not call all printed matter literature; that is certain. What do we *not* call so? We do not call an almanac literature; we do not call the news columns of a newspaper literature. Why not? Manifestly because we are to throw these away to-morrow. Literature must have some *permanence.* This idea of permanence we shall find always implicated in our conception of literature. Indeed, it might be a useful provisional definition of literature to say that it consists of those books which have permanent value. But this definition would be of little ultimate service, since it leaves unanswered the essential question, What gives a book permanent value? It must, clearly, contain something that will always be of value or interest to men; but that is not enough. A table of logarithms, a report of the State Board of Charities, the volumes that fill the shelves of the lawyer — we do not call these books literature. Yet they contain matter of permanent value. The table of logarithms will be of value

"Till the sun grows cold
And the stars wax old;"

and the lawyer, the statesman, the historian, will always find the material for his labors in such volumes as the others enumerated. Yet we never think of them as literature. We may go further in the same method of exclusion. We hesitate to pronounce a treatise on algebra or conic sections literature, or a treatise on geology, or a treatise on analytic psychology, or a treatise on dogmatic theology. These books certainly all contain matter of permanent value to men; yet we should probably rule out the conic sections instantly, hesitate a little on the geology, and perhaps be in doubt as to the psychology and theology. But some book made up of pretty trifles of verse about garlands, and girls, and locks of hair we admit instantly to the category of literature. The one set of books contain enduring truths that men can never hereafter forget or live without; the other book contains some graceful nothings that a Waller has said or sung to his Sacharissa, a Herrick to his Julia. Yet the weighty book we shake our heads over and rule out; the book of trifles is unquestioned literature and down in all the histories. Now, why is this?

Perhaps our provisional definition will help us a step further here. We have said that literature might be said to consist — not of those books that *contain* truths of permanent interest, but of books that *are themselves* of permanent interest. That

test these graver books can hardly meet. The facts and truths they contain are, indeed, of permanent value; but the books are not. Because the facts and truths can be restated in other forms, applied in manifold ways, and so become part of the common stock of men's knowledge, while the books themselves in which the truths were first stated shall perish utterly. The truths live; the books die.) Nobody now needs to go to the original treatise of Newton to learn the essential truths of the theory of gravitation; they are incorporated into all physical knowledge and taken for granted in all physical discussion. Now, no book is literature, in the proper sense of the word, if it is liable to be superseded next year or next century by another book saying the same things and saying them better. The book itself must have permanence and not be the temporary receptacle for the transmission of truth. And thus the question still recurs, What gives a book this individual life?

It is sometimes said that a book has this individual life when it is the expression of the personality of its author, when it in some way represents the individuality of a man. It is undoubtedly true, as was stated in the last chapter, that a genuine work of literature does in some way express the personality of its author; but is the converse true? Is every book that expresses personality literature? Hardly. Not to mention the obvious fact that the personality expressed must be permanently inter-

esting, — worth expression, — there are two objec tions to this test of literature. In the first place, it is vague. What is meant by expressing personality? Does not the treatise on dogmatic theology, or even a great mathematical treatise, express personality? Does it not display industry, persistence, great power of consecutive argument, a disposition and ability to consider truths in their most abstract and general relations? And secondly, if we admit that every work of literature does reveal personality in some sense in which a work of science cannot (and that doubtless is true), the question still remains, *How* does it reveal personality? Why is it that the poem is an expression of the individuality of the poet, while the scientific treatise does not express the individuality of the scientist? If we can get at the quality by virtue of which the one can, while the other in want of that quality cannot, reveal personality, we may find it to be what we are seeking, the distinguishing, defining mark of literature

Now if we compare those books containing truths of undoubted value, but not ranked as literature, — the treatise on calculus, or geology, or philosophy, — with the poem which seems to contain no truth of permanent value, but proves itself literature by strangely refusing to die, — what quality shall we find in the poem that is not in the treatise? This: the poem appeals to the emotions, while the treatise appeals to the intellect. And here

think, we shall find the mark we seek. *It is the power to appeal to the emotions that gives a book permanent interest, and consequently literary quality.*

Let us see whether this power will explain the qualities of permanence and individuality that literature, we admit, must possess. As to permanence, by a kind of paradox it may be said that it is the very transiency of emotion which makes a book of lasting interest. One of the essential differences between knowledge and emotion is that knowledge is lasting and emotion is fleeting. Whenever we have thoroughly learned a fact or truth, we have it; it is so much addition to our permanent stock of knowledge. Our powers of retention are limited, to be sure: we may forget a fact or truth; but it is not necessary from the constitution of our minds that we should. When, therefore, we have once read and mastered some treatise that appeals to the intellect, we do not care to read it again. The truths it contains are part of our permanent intellectual acquisitions, and the book itself is thrown by. Emotion, on the other hand, is essentially different. It is by its nature transient. We speak of emotions, but we cannot speak of knowledges; because knowledge is a permanent acquisition, while emotions are a series of constantly changing experiences. The emotion which I feel from reading the poem now will be gone two hours from now. It cannot persist. It will be renewed again, however, though perhaps

with less intensity, whenever I read the poem again or remember it; but I must have the book itself either in fact or memory, as a stimulus to the emotion And thus I return to it again and again. If it deserves to be called literature at all, I may wish to read it more than once; if it be great literature, any number of readings will not exhaust it It is for *me* an abiding book.

Notice also that it is this power of appeal to the emotions that explains the permanence of a book from century to century, through the ages. It was remarked in the previous chapter that art is the only thing that lasts; that while the science, the knowledge of Homer's day is antiquated, Homer is not antiquated. Why not? Simply because Homer makes appeal to the emotions, and men's emotions remain essentially the same. That is, while any single emotion is transient, the general character of human emotion does not *greatly* alter. Each successive wave of feeling rises for its little instant, breaks and passes; but the ocean of waves rolls steadily on through the ages. It is true, indeed, that there must be a development in the affections, the sensibilities, the whole range of feeling; yet the great fundamental emotions of the race suffer comparatively little change either in their nature or their objects. It is the "thoughts of men," rather than their feelings, that are "widened with the process of the suns" The story of Achilles' wrath, the love of Hector and

Andromache, the passion of Paris and Helen,—these remain ever warm and moving. Without this stability in human emotions all great art would be impossible.[1]

[1] The writer who has stated most clearly this power to appeal to the emotions as a test of literature is De Quincey. His view may be seen in the following paragraphs:—

"In a philosophical use of the word, Literature is the direct and adequate antithesis of Books of Knowledge. . . . Now what is that antithesis to *knowledge* which is here implicitly latent in the word literature? The vulgar antithesis is *pleasure* ('aut prodesse volunt, aut delectare poetæ'). Books, we are told, propose to instruct or amuse. Indeed! However, not to spend any words upon it, I suppose you will admit that this wretched antithesis will be of no service to us. . . . The true antithesis to knowledge, in this case, is not *pleasure*, but *power*. All that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge. Now if it be asked what is meant by communicating power, I, in my turn, would ask by what name a man would designate the case in which I should be made to feel vividly, and with a vital consciousness, emotions which ordinary life rarely or never supplies occasions for exciting?"—"Letters to a Young Man," iii., Works, X., 48.

"In that great social organ which, collectively, we call literature, there may be distinguished two separate offices that may blend, and often *do* so, but capable severally of a severe insulation, and naturally fitted for a reciprocal repulsion. There is, first, the literature of *knowledge*: and, secondly, the literature of *power*. The function of the first is—to *teach*; the function of the second is—to *move*: the first is a rudder; the second an oar or a sail. The first speaks to the *mere* discursive understanding; the second speaks ultimately, it may happen, to the higher understanding or reason, but always through affections of pleasure and sympathy."—"The Poetry of Pope," Works, XI., 51.

The term *power* used by De Quincey in these passages evidently means power over our feelings; emotional appeal. It will be noticed, furthermore, that—especially in the second

(We shall see, also, that this power of appeal to the emotions is the quality by virtue of which a book becomes an expression of the personality of its author. For it is evident on a moment's reflection that it is only in the realm of emotion that there is any opportunity for differences of individual character to find expression. Facts and truths, in so far as they are correctly apprehended, are the same to all minds. "A straight line is the shortest distance between two points,"—that, we say, is a truth; *i.e.* a generalized statement of objective fact. The exact sciences are made up of truths that can be thus completely and precisely stated. And it is the object of all other sciences to reduce the truths with which they are concerned to statement as near to this complete and precise form as possible, so that they shall have the same meaning always, to all men. "A violet is a herbaceous plant, with alternate or single leaves, furnished with stipules and axillary flowers, solitary,

passage—De Quincey uses the quality as a mark to divide literature into two kinds, the "literature of knowledge" and the "literature of power." The position taken in this volume is, that it serves rather as a mark to distinguish all that is literature from all that is not. If there are any writings destitute of this power, they are not literature, and would not be called so even in popular usage. On the other hand, many writings whose "function is to teach" possess this power, and are therefore literature—history, for example. A part of what De Quincey terms the "literature of knowledge" I should not deem literature at all; another part differs from his "literature of power" only in possessing the power of emotional appeal in lower degree.

with stem evident and flowers springing from the axils of the leaves." These statements do not include all the things that we mean when we say "violet," nor all the qualities that are found in every violet; but if they are a good definition they do express a group of qualities which are always found in a violet and which can be apprehended together in the mind. If you understand the definition and I understand it, we shall have the same conception, and that conception will be correct, though not complete. The only possibility of difference arises from the imperfection of our knowledge. In a word, differences in the intellectual apprehension of a fact or truth always arise from ignorance or imperfection. If two men could be conceived as having perfect intellectual apprehension of everything coming under their notice, and taking notice of the same facts and truths, the mental operations of the two men would be absolutely identical. That is the ideal toward which all science must strive. Now it is evident that the statement in language of such facts and truths as these, if it be accurate, leaves no room for the expression of personality. The most nearly perfect language of the intellect is the language of algebra; it is, indeed, as nearly perfect as language can be,— and there is no possibility of the expression of personality by it. And all scientific language, *i.e.* all language expressive of purely intellectual conceptions, approaches perfection just in the

degree that it resembles the language of mathematics.

(But the moment the element of emotion enters language, the personality of the speaker begins to express itself. We all ought to think the same thing alike; but no two men *can* feel just alike about it. So soon as an object begins to touch the feelings, there is diversity in its effects, and in this diversity opportunity for the expression of the individual. The star that I look out of my window upon ought to give me sensations precisely similar to those it gives my neighbor; all science is based upon the supposition that it does. The statements of the astronomer as to its distance, size, movements, etc., mean the same to me as to him; but the emotions that the star gives to my neighbor will probably be quite different from those it gives to me. Now literature never attempts to state the fact merely as fact; literature renders the fact plus its emotional effect in some of its emotional rela-

ture, literature thus becomes at once an expression of personality.)

(We may notice, moreover, that the power to stir the emotions is the secret of other, wider qualities which we often ascribe to literature. Poetry, Matthew Arnold used to say, is the "criticism of life"; it was a true, though perhaps a vague, definition. Poetry is, at all events, the poet's criticism of life,

with stem evident and flowers springing from the axils of the leaves." These statements do not include all the things that we mean when we say "violet," nor all the qualities that are found in every violet; but if they are a good definition they do express a group of qualities which are always found in a violet and which can be apprehended together in the mind. If you understand the definition and I understand it, we shall have the same conception, and that conception will be correct, though not complete. The only possibility of difference arises from the imperfection of our knowledge. In a word, differences in the intellectual apprehension of a fact or truth always arise from ignorance or imperfection. If two men could be conceived as having perfect intellectual apprehension of everything coming under their notice, and taking notice of the same facts and truths, the mental operations of the two men would be absolutely identical. That is the ideal toward which all science must strive. Now it is evident that the statement in language of such facts and truths as these, if it be accurate, leaves no room for the expression of personality. The most nearly perfect language of the intellect is the language of algebra; it is, indeed, as nearly perfect as language can be,— and there is no possibility of the expression of personality by it. And all scientific language, *i.e.* all language expressive of purely intellectual conceptions, approaches perfection just in the

degree that it resembles the language of mathematics.

But the moment the element of emotion enters language, the personality of the speaker begins to express itself. We all ought to think the same thing alike, but no two men *can* feel just alike about it. So soon as an object begins to touch the feelings, there is diversity in its effects, and in this diversity opportunity for the expression of the individual. The star that I look out of my window upon ought to give me sensations precisely similar to those it gives my neighbor; all science is based upon the supposition that it does. The statements of the astronomer as to its distance, size, movements, etc., mean the same to me as to him; but the emotions that the star gives to my neighbor will probably be quite different from those it gives to me. Now literature never attempts to state the fact merely as fact; literature renders the fact plus its emotional effect, in some of its emotional relations; and as the personality of any man is revealed by the way in which facts affect his emotional nature, literature thus becomes at once an expression of personality.

We may notice, moreover, that the power to stir the emotions is the secret of other, wider qualities which we often ascribe to literature. Poetry, Matthew Arnold used to say, is the "criticism of life"; it was a true, though perhaps a vague, definition. Poetry is, at all events, the poet's criticism of life;

that is, the impression which life, as he sees and imagines it, makes upon his emotions, and which he, in turn, tries to impress upon ours. But the phrase is not so strictly a description of poetry as of all literature. Literature in general is a "criticism of life," or perhaps better, an expression and interpretation of life. And the point to be noticed here is that it is this power over emotion that makes literature an interpreter of life. For life, in the large moral sense in which we use the word, is determined, not principally by outward facts and circumstances, nor yet by thought and speculation, but by its emotions. Emotions are motives, as their name implies; they induce the will; they decide the whole current of life. Character is indicated by them, and must always be educated through them. "Out of the heart are the issues of life." Literature, therefore, which at once speaks the feelings of the writer and stirs those of the reader, is necessarily the truest and deepest record of human life.

But perhaps it will be said that this test restricts too narrowly the meaning of the word *literature*. Even if it be admitted that whatever has permanent power to appeal to the emotions is literature, is the converse true, "Whatever is literature has power to appeal to the emotions"? For instance, it may be urged, history is undoubtedly literature, and a very prominent variety of it; yet history does not appeal to the emotions. On the contrary,

it is often claimed as a virtue for some historical writing that it does not appeal to the emotions, that it is a cool, impartial narration of facts. The test, it is asserted, is a test not of literature at large, but of poetry, or at most of *belles-lettres*, of literature regarded narrowly as one of the fine arts.

To this objection it may be answered that it is not necessary that the quality which makes a book literature should be the first object and purpose of the book. Nevertheless, only in so far as the book possesses that quality can it be literature. Not all history *is* literature, by any definition which would not include all printed matter; but whenever historical writing *is* literature, and just so far as it is, will it be found to possess this quality of exciting emotion. This is its saving *literary* grace. What is the difference between a history which everybody admits to be literature — say Macaulay's or Parkman's — and a chronicle which nobody thinks literature? The chronicle may be supposed to be full enough to contain all the facts included in the history, yet manifestly it is only the raw material for history. Is not the difference, evidently, that in the history facts are so combined and narrated as to appeal to our emotions? The history does not merely give us facts; it shows us men and events; it makes upon us, we say, the impression of life. And "life" always appeals to the emotions. The book, then, is literature just in proportion as it does this. This, to be sure, is not its final pur-

pose. As history, the purpose of the book is to bring us into acquaintance with some past age; and it ought, as history, to have a whole class of virtues that are irrelevant to its claims as literature, — accuracy, fulness, impartiality. When it loses all these virtues it will cease to be history and become historical fiction; but if it still retain its power of appeal to the emotions it will still be literature. The excellence of the book as historical literature will depend on the skill of the author to combine historical and literary virtues. He must give us the facts fully, accurately, impartially; and he must give them to us not as dry memoranda but as living, moving action. For the two classes of qualities are not incompatible outside of strict science. Indeed, the true historian knows that a great series of human actions can never be adequately comprehended by the intellectual faculties alone; he must set in motion the sympathies. For human action always involves moral quality, and that can never be understood or rightly estimated save through the sympathies. It is only when we see the age living again as it did when it was here, and feel about it as we might have done had we been in the midst of it, that we are really prepared to understand it. The chronicle is not only not the interesting book, it is not, in the fullest sense of the word, the true book.

A similar line of remark, of course, may be made with reference to various other forms of literature

besides history. Their prime purpose is not to appeal to the emotions, but it is only as they do this that they become literature; and usually their purpose is all the better reached by means of this literary power. What, for example, distinguishes criticism like Ruskin's or Matthew Arnold's from the precepts of the rhetoric book or the bald discussion upon this page, if it be not the power of these great writers to warm and illuminate truth by a constant play of emotion?

(In fine, then, the power to appeal to the emotions is always combined in literature with other qualities; and sometimes the prime purpose of the book depends upon these other qualities; but it will none the less be found true that the power to appeal to the emotions is the distinguishing literary mark.) When this appeal is the chief purpose of the work, then we have poetry or *belles-lettres;* when, from the nature of the subject, no such appeal is possible, then we may have science, but not literature; when the appeal is a means and not an end, or is incidental only, then we have writing varying in literary quality with the force of this appeal.[1]

[1] De Quincey admits that in practice it is difficult to distinguish between his two kinds of literature. "The reason why the broad distinctions between the two literatures of power and knowledge so little fix the attention lies in the fact that a vast proportion of books, —history, biography, travels, miscellaneous essays, etc., —lying in a middle zone, confound these distinctions by blending them."—"The Poetry of Pope," Works, XI., 53. It seems hardly worth the while to maintain a classification which cannot be applied to a "vast proportion of books."

But in any case it is only this power over the emotions that can keep alive the individual book.

Now if our analysis thus far be correct, there is a radical distinction between science and literature; so that all writings of any value might be rationally divided into two classes, scientific and literary; as, similarly, all man's handiwork can be divided into art and fine art. In particular specimens the two doubtless shade into each other; but the principle of distinction holds good. For the division is based upon a fundamental difference in mental attitude and temper. The scientific temper observes all things with a view to discover their mode of existence, their relations to each other and to the environment; the literary temper observes all things in their relations to man's emotional and moral nature. The botanist, for example, scans a plant to discover all physical facts about it; he wishes to know of what parts it is made up; what similarities there are between these parts and corresponding ones in other plants; what is the function of each part; what changes they undergo in the growth of the plant; how all develop from the time of the first germination of the plant until, having produced the fertile seeds of other plants, it dies. His processes are purely intellectual. It is truths that he is after, that is, facts and laws — which are only sequences between facts. But for the man of literary temper all these matters have only secondary interest. He rather asks, What is the plant

for? Its different parts are doubtless so adapted to each other and to their surroundings as to secure its growth and to enable it to reproduce itself again and again in succeeding generations; but what is it all for? And he finds answer to his question by saying that the plant was made for its highest power over human emotions, *i.e.* for beauty. The plant was made for flowers. As Ruskin says, "In the thought of nature herself there is in a plant nothing else *but* flowers."[1] In like manner Matthew Arnold, in his charming essay on Maurice de Guerin,[2] says that poetry — but to a degree it is true of all literature — "has the power of so dealing with things as to awaken a wonderfully new, full, and intimate sense of them and of our relations with them. It is not Linnæus, or Cavendish, or Cuvier, who gives us the true sense of earth, or water, or animals, or plants, who seizes their secret for us, who makes us participate in their life; it is Shakspere, with his

"'Daffodils
That come before the swallow dares, and take
The winds of March with beauty;'

it is Wordsworth, with his

"'voice . . . heard
In spring-time from the cuckoo-bird,
Breaking the silence of the seas
Among the farthest Hebrides,'

[1] "Fors Clavigera," Letter V.
[2] "Essays in Criticism."

it is Keats, with his

> "'*moving* waters at their priest-like task
> Of cold ablution round Earth's human shores;'

it is Chateaubriand, with his 'cîme indéterminée des forêts.'"

This illustrates well enough the difference between the attitude of the man of science and that of the man of letters, toward all things. The one studies to get a clear intellectual conception of the relation of things to each other, of similarities and sequences; the other regards the significance of things for our moral and emotional nature. And the expression in writing of the one form of activity is science; of the other, literature.

It is, however, to be understood — as has been already said — that many books primarily scientific in purpose have incidentally emotional interest and so literary quality; and, on the other hand, all emotional literature must have a basis in fact and truth. For it is not to be supposed that the two tempers which we have termed literary and scientific are altogether incompatible, or must always work separately. On the contrary, any symmetrical mental development requires the cultivation of both. But in any given individual one is likely to be habitually predominant. Moreover, while the two may be combined and work together, they do not mutually support and increase each other. The physicist's sense of the beauty of a sunset is not

diminished by his knowledge of the optical laws it illustrates; but neither is it increased. Indeed, it is probable that any high degree of attention concentrated upon the physical laws of the phenomenon would necessitate some corresponding withdrawal of perception from its beauty. In general, it is certain that cultivation of the one temper does not imply growth, *pari passu*, in the other. So far is this from true that in forms of activity which demand constant exercise of the one, while allowing almost entire neglect of the other, we often find the unused temper in a state of atrophy or decay. The case of Mr. Darwin is a familiar instance in point. Instances of an opposite and still more unfortunate sort may be frequently seen in persons who have so accustomed themselves to a purely emotional view of life that they have lost the power of vigorous intellectual activity upon facts. The sentimentalist, the æsthete, the fanatic, are proverbially deformed types of character.[1]

[1] I have not thought it necessary to enter into any investigation of the nature or genesis of emotion. I am not unaware that the explanation of the essential quality of literature given in this chapter may be objected to on the ground that there is no essential contrast between emotional and intellectual processes. Emotion, it is now said, is a function of consciousness accompanying, in greater or less degree, all mental acts. Says Mr H R. Marshall ("Æsthetic Principles," p. 39), "Pleasures and pains are qualities either of which, under the proper conditions, may belong to any element of consciousness, and one of which must in any case belong to each element." The amount and quality of emotion attending any mental act will be determined in great measure, subjectively, by the temperament of the

The essential element in literature, then, is the power to appeal to the emotions. But this is not the only element in literature. In only one of the fine arts does this power seem to exist by itself, and, so to speak, constitute the art. Music is the most typical of the arts in that the distinguishing element of all art is here found in isolation; for music appeals directly to the emotions without the intervention of any definite intellectual conceptions whatever. We do not ask what it means to the intellect; that would, in most cases, be absurd. We cannot describe it in terms of fact or truth; if we attempt to do so, we find that we have missed the music altogether and described something else. As Browning makes the musician say in a very suggestive poem:—

"Each tone in our scale in itself is naught;
It is everywhere in the world—loud, soft, and all is said.

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person quite as much as by the nature of the action. To some persons a purely intellectual process, *e.g.* an involved algebraic demonstration, may give most decided emotions of pleasure; a book composed of such demonstrations to him would then, it may be urged, be literature.

In answer to which objections it seems sufficient for my purpose to say:—

1. That every one recognizes an inherent difference between thought and emotion.

2. That emotion is in no sense a *necessary* accompaniment of intellectual processes; the mathematician surely *may* go through his demonstration as correctly without either pleasure or pain.

3. If pure intellection *were* normally accompanied by any marked degree of pleasurable emotion, it would be proper material for literature; but it is not. Most men do not necessarily associate emotion with purely intellectual processes.

> Give it to me! I mix it with two in my thought,
> And there! Ye have heard and seen!
> Consider, and bow the head!"

Doubtless a part of the effect of music may be explained by its power of vague suggestion. It seems to hint indefinite, half-formed intellectual conceptions which are bound up with all our feelings, and to recall in a dreamy way former experiences which are associated with pleasurable emotion. And the effect of music may perhaps be heightened by making these suggestions more definite, as when the musician gives us what are called tone-pictures, or when music is married to poetry in song. Yet the primary appeal of the music seems to be to the feelings, not to any associated experience or sentiment. It is probable, too, that for most persons the effects of music are keenest as well as purest when there is no attempt to associate it with anything else, as in the case of pure instrumental tone in the orchestra, or of the human voice without words or with words in an unknown tongue. However this may be, the power of music over the emotions would seem to be simple and ultimate, not analyzable, and having no necessary connection with intellectual processes of any kind. All we can say is that music is the language by which the emotions most naturally express themselves, and so awakens by sympathy the emotions of the listener. The truth is that all the spontaneous expressions of emo-

tion, unless the emotion be so excessive as to pass beyond all control, are of the nature of music. Laughter and weeping, calling, shouting, the tones of excited conversation — they all show those elements of rhythm and melody which are the essence of music. And, as might be expected, the emotional effects of music are keener than those of any other art — far keener; but they are by consequence more transient, and, having no connection with intellectual conceptions, they have not that influence upon our rational and moral life which the other arts exert. Music is sometimes called the "divine art"; in fact it is the most unmoral of all the arts, *i.e.* the most entirely disconnected from all distinctively ethical influences.

But to return to our first statement, — in this power to arouse the feelings *directly* music seems to stand alone. Even the arts of form and color, sculpture and painting, cannot do this. They must present to our vision concrete objects of beauty, recognized by our intelligence and associated with pleasing emotions in our own experience. The statue, the painting, *mean* something, we say, in a sense that music does not. And literature, preeminently, must work through definite intellectual conceptions. Its appeal to the emotions must be indirect. That appeal is usually made, much as in the allied arts of sculpture and painting, by presenting to contemplation concrete objects or persons, or particular actions. The faculty by

which this is done we call imagination. As a condition of emotion, it is an important element in all literature; most important, of course, in the more highly emotional forms of literature.)

(Furthermore, in any attempt to appreciate or estimate a work of literature we have always to consider a distinctly intellectual element, the truth or fact which must serve as a basis of all writing.) In some forms of literature, as we have seen, this element constitutes the purpose of the book and hence mainly determines its worth. We do not value a history primarily for its vivacity, picturesqueness, pathos, essential though these may be to literary quality; we value the history primarily for its accuracy, justice of view, wisdom, that is, for its truth. (Even in our estimate of any of the more typical forms of literature, such as poetry, we shall always need to consider the facts or truths underlying the emotion. For we shall find that without adequate intellectual basis strong emotion passes into anger, rant, or gush; quick emotion, into sentimentality or irritability; that falsehood or mistaken truth leads ultimately to unhealthy emotion; and that there can be no really profound emotion without something great in the underlying ideas.)

Lastly, (in our critical estimate of any work of literature we must always pay attention to its Form. Emotion, imagination, and thought must all find expression through the medium of language. The term *Form* is used to include all

consideration of this expression as distinguished from the substance expressed, the manner as distinguished from the matter of writing. As thus defined, Form is evidently not an end in itself, but a means; yet it is so important as to demand separate consideration. For the power of making permanent appeal to the emotions, which we have concluded to be the essential quality of literature, seems to depend, to some extent, always, and in many cases almost entirely, upon the way in which the thought or fact is put. Every one knows that truths worn into commonplaces get a new and abiding power over our feelings simply from the form of words into which some one has had the skill or the fortune to cast them.

"O wad some Power the giftie gie us
To see oursels as others see us!"

We may say there is no meaning added to such a thought by the way it is put; but there is certainly new power added to it. Now this mastery of his medium of expression, in literature as in every other art, is one of the surest marks of power in the artist. It always implies native endowment and usually implies nice training; and it is a legitimate object of admiration. The true critic knows how to appreciate such technical skill in handling; he knows that beauties do not come by accident, and that not even genius is exempt from the toil of workmanship; and thus with his sympathetic appreciation of the work he criti-

cises there is blended an artistic admiration of its Form.

In summary, then, we find that in all critical examination of literature we must notice the following elements: —

1. Emotion, which, if our analysis be correct, is the characteristic and distinguishing element of literature. It is only in the more typical forms of literature, however, that it is the end for which the work is written; in other cases it is incidental or a means to some further end

2. Imagination, without which it is impossible in most instances to awaken emotion.

3. Thought, which must be the basis of all forms of art, except music. In all didactic and persuasive varieties of literature this is the most important element, as it furnishes the purpose for which the book is written.

4. Form, which is not an end in itself, but the means by which all thought and feeling find expression, and is so important as to deserve separate attention.

In the following chapters we shall discuss these elements in the order named. We should remember, however, that while we may consider them separately, the total impression of a work of literature is always a composite of all four, and that neither element can be adequately appreciated without recognizing the concurrent influence of the other three.

CHAPTER THIRD

The Emotional Element in Literature

To prevent any possible confusion, it may be well to ask, before entering upon the discussion of the emotional element in literature, *Whose* emotions are referred to? For in all discussion of literary effects there are three different parties of whom emotion may be predicated, and we sometimes get into perplexities by confusing the three. We may mean the emotion of the reader, or the emotion of the writer, or the emotion exhibited by the imaginary persons created by the writer. When we speak of emotional values in Hamlet, do we mean the emotion we feel in reading the play, or that which Shakspere felt in creating it, or that exhibited by Hamlet, Ophelia, or the King? In common conversation it is probable that we frequently mean all three. For instance, when we say that emotion must be "genuine," we usually are thinking that the writer must really feel himself what he pretends to feel; when we say that a play or novel has many powerful situations, we oftenest have in mind the exhibition of powerful emotions by the characters; and when we speak of a poem or passage as thrilling, or pathetic, or in-

spiring, we refer to its effect on our own emotions. And to some extent each of the three meanings does imply the other two; since it is doubtful whether an author can exhibit powerful emotion in the characters of his creation without some feeling of that emotion himself; and, similarly, the only sure way for the author to excite emotion in the reader is to exhibit it in himself or in the imaginary personages of his creating. But though the word is often used in this loose way, it will be confined in this discussion, so far as possible, to one meaning,—the emotion of *the reader*; by the phrase, emotional element in literature, then, we will understand the power of literature to awaken emotion in us who read.

We may ask, first, What are the emotions to which literature makes appeal? Now here we need not fall into the folly of attempting to enumerate or even to classify the literary emotions; they are too various and intricate for that. We may say, however, that there are two classes of emotions—and probably only two—that are excluded from the range of legitimate literary effects.

1. Literature cannot appeal to the *self-regarding emotions*. By this term is meant all such emotions as prompt us to attain an object for our personal use, as economy or covetousness; or that prompt us to escape a danger that menaces our personal safety, as terror; or that prompt us to return either an injury or a benefit rendered to us per-

sonally, as revenge on the one hand, or gratitude on the other. The contemplation of these emotions in others may awaken in us feeling that has literary quality, but they themselves, although often pleasurable and commendable, are not literary emotions. (Gratitude to a man for having secured me a position or having paid me money is not a literary emotion; but admiration for the honesty that scrupulously pays its debts or for the benevolence that does a kind deed, may well be. The emotion in the one case is self-regarding, personal; in the other it is universal. Literary emotions must always be of the latter sort.

2. *Painful emotions* are never a proper object of literary appeal. This condition may perhaps seem too obvious to need statement, but it excludes a whole class of powerful emotions,—disgust, contempt, envy, anger (not indignation, which is a very different passion), jealousy, and the like.) These are excluded from literary effects because they are painful; and in a healthy mental condition we never crave painful feeling.) There are, however, some morbid mental conditions for which emotions that to a normal temperament would be distasteful, seem to have a kind of fascination. This craving for emotion that a healthy taste would find painful or disgusting—a craving that finds a parallel in certain disordered physical appetites—may proceed, sometimes from sensibilities jaded and overstimulated by excess, sometimes

from a cheerless philosophy and a dreary, pessimistic view of the facts of life. But whatever its cause and wherever it is found, whether in the individual or in society, it is always a symptom of disease; and the disposition to pander to it is a sure proof of literary decline. The last decades of the nineteenth century have given us considerable writing of this sort, especially in fiction. But no realistic vividness of imagination, no marvellous felicity of form, can ever make good literature out of pictures of essential vulgarity of soul, of nerveless self-abandonment to appetite or circumstance, of squalid suffering, aimless, ignoble, unredeemed. Such pictures can awaken in a healthy mind only feelings of contempt, or loathing, or pain.

(Yet the depiction of painful emotions and experiences may be, of course, a fruitful source of the highest literary effect. Here we touch the problem of all pathos and tragedy. For it is a familiar fact of human nature that the contemplation of pain in others does not of necessity produce painful feeling in us. Is there any agony more awful than that of Othello or of Lear, any pathos more pitiful than that of Ophelia or Cordelia? Yet we read their story with emotions that we call pleasurable. There is, in fact, a large group of noble and pleasurable emotions that can be evoked in any high degree only by the spectacle of pain in some form. Thus undeserved pain or sorrow always produces in the mind that contem-

plates it pity. And pity is pleasurable on two conditions: first, if we may feel that the pity or the effort prompted by it actually relieves the pain we pity; when the pity is obviously unavailing, it passes into pain. Thus it is a pain to pity the sufferings of a friend dying of an incurable disease, or enduring the torture of a surgical operation; but it is not a pain to pity the grief of a friend at undeserved abuse or calumny when our pity lightens the burden the friend has to bear. And, second, pity is pleasurable when the sorrows pitied are known to be imaginary, as they are in poetry and fiction, or are overpast as they are in biography and history. Here we have the pleasure of the benevolent emotion without any cost in active effort, and without the element of pain which always attends the knowledge of real sorrow. Similarly admiration, in any energetic form, always implies the endurance of suffering; indignation, the infliction of suffering. For the heroic virtues, courage, endurance, devotion, magnanimity, superiority of soul to circumstance, can only be proved by the test of pain; and it is really the exhibition of these virtues, and not the mere pain, which calls out the literary emotions. It is joy and strength to know that human resolve can laugh at terrors and that human love is stronger than death. Or, again, sometimes it is the sublime spectacle of the vindication of outraged moral law, assent to which by us gives a certain solemn

pleasure. A great tragedy of Shakspere, for example, appeals to all these emotions together,—*pity, admiration, indignation, grave moral assent*. More generally still, there seems to be an ultimate pleasure in all exercise of sympathy, and that even when the ground of sympathy is a painful experience. Hence the charm of much of the literature of pathos and of doubt. The poetry of one of the most finished of modern English poets is, for the most part, only the expression of a calm, stoical, but absolute, resignation of most of the common grounds of religious faith and hope; yet thousands of readers have unquestionably found in it a deep, if half-mournful, satisfaction. For merely to know that another thinks and feels as I do, that he is truly uttering my experience with a beauty and force that I would fain command but cannot,—this of itself is sufficient to warm the heart into a sense of human brotherhood and spiritual companionship. For like causes, all phases of experience, however painful or mournful, that are universal and form a part of the common human lot, evoke in thought a not unpleasing sympathy. Examples of this may be seen in the universal contrast between the aspirations of youth and the attainments of age—"*si jeunesse savait, si vieillesse pouvait!*"—the inevitable slackening of the pulse of life, the decay of imagination or passion with the passing years, and the supreme event which levels all distinctions and brings the high-

est and the humblest to the solemn kinship of the grave. But while in such ways as these human suffering may furnish the highest literary motives, we may lay it down as a general rule that good literature never exhibits pain in a merely wanton and aimless way; but only in order to call out some emotion that is healthy and—in the wide sense in which we have explained the word—pleasurable.

If, however, we exclude these two classes of emotion, the self-regarding and the painful, the entire range of human feeling is open to literary appeal. If a book have permanent power to appeal to *any* other emotion, that book is, *ipso facto*, literature. Any classification of the various literary emotions would be very difficult, and if possible practically useless. There is probably no attempt at such classification more nearly successful than Ruskin's. In the third volume of *Modern Painters* he gives a definition of poetry that might serve, with slight modification, as a definition of all literature. "Poetry," he says, "is the suggestion by the imagination of noble grounds for noble emotions;" and he then proceeds to enumerate the "noble emotions." These are, according to Ruskin, "on the one side, Love, Veneration, Admiration, and Joy; and on the other, their opposites, Hate, Indignation, Horror, and Grief." These, he says, in their combination constitute "poetic feeling." Ruskin is defining poetry, and would not maintain, perhaps

that all literature is restricted to these emotions; but it seems very doubtful whether even all cases of "poetic feeling" can be shown to be analyzable into these few elements, unless, indeed, some of them (as joy, for example) be given a meaning wide and vague enough to cover almost all pleasurable feeling. There certainly is poetic feeling in the following passage; yet with which of those named by Ruskin can it be classed, or with what combination of them?

"It is ten o'clock at night. A strange and mystic moonlight, with a fresh breeze and a sky crossed by a few wandering clouds, makes our terrace delightful. These pale and gentle rays shed from the zenith a subdued and penetrating peace: it is like the calm joy or the pensive smile of experience, combined with a certain stoic strength. The stars shine, the leaves tremble in the silver light. Not a sound in all the landscape; great gulfs of shadow under the green alleys and at the corners of the steps. Everything is secret, solemn, mysterious. O night hours, hours of silence and solitude! — with you are grace and melancholy; you sadden and you console."[1]

Here are, doubtless, love, admiration, veneration, joy, and something of grief; yet the dominant emotion seems a little different from either of these, or any combination of them. It is rather peace —

[1] Amiel's "Journal," September 7, 1851; trans. by Mrs. Humphry Ward.

and that is quite different from joy. Yet, however you name it, it is a type of emotion which forms one of the most common and effective motives in poetry. The reader may recall a passage from one of the most exquisite poems of this century — Matthew Arnold's *Resignation* — which explicitly affirms that the poet feels the secret of the world to be

"not joy, but peace."

Certainly if we sweep our thought over the wide field of human nature we must conclude that it is impossible to include all literary effects, even of poetry, within the four pairs of contrasted emotions named by Ruskin. Aspiration and content, the sense of effort and the sense of rest, humor, the sense of beauty pure and simple, — these are emotions that do not seem, by any strict definition, to come within his list. Then there are the emotions on which the charm of literary *form* chiefly depends, — the musical sense, and the pleasure of repeated surprise given us by versification and especially by rhyme; still different is the sense of pleasure which we feel at successful *imitation* — which certainly has much to do with art — a quality to which in literature we give such names as "fidelity," "verisimilitude," "truth to nature." This last is the main source of our liking for what we call realism in all art — of which more hereafter.

Nor shall we find it easy to subsume all these

feelings under some more general emotion or sensibility into which they may all be resolved. One attempt to do this, however, is worthy of notice. (It is often said that literature — and still oftener said that poetry — appeals to the sense of *beauty;* and this term *beauty,* or the sense of beauty, is often used as if it comprehended all the feelings which literature can touch. The word is certainly applied to a very wide variety of things that agree in giving pleasure. We speak, not inaccurately, of a beautiful landscape, a beautiful woman, a beautiful sonata, a beautiful poem, a beautiful thought, a beautiful action. In one of the most recent and thoughtful treatises upon Æsthetics, beauty is defined broadly as "pleasure objectified." "Or, in less technical language, Beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing." "It depends upon the degree of objectivity my feeling has attained at the moment whether I say 'It pleases me,' or, 'It is beautiful.' If I am self-conscious and critical I shall probably use the one phrase; if I am impulsive and susceptible, the other."[1] Thus broadly defined, beauty will certainly include all literary emotion; but it will include much more.) By this definition, it should certainly seem that to a man of healthy appetite his dinner must always be a thing of beauty. Ordinary usage instinctively gives a somewhat narrower meaning than this to the word.

[1] Santayana, "The Sense of Beauty," pp. 49, 51.

"I am warned by the ill example of many philosophers," says Emerson, "not to attempt any definition of beauty." Fortunately no such attempt at philosophic definition is necessary here: it is needful only to remark that the word, as defined by general but careful usage, designates the power to stir a class of emotions which, though very wide, is far from including the whole range of feeling to which literature appeals. A moment's reflection would seem to suggest that the simplest, and in the case of the individual, the original form of this emotion is that which arises from objects of sight or hearing, especially the former. As I write these lines I am sitting by a window which commands a wide prospect. In the middle distance is a tree, the first object that my eye falls upon as I look up from my paper. Its summer verdure has been changed to gorgeous hues of copper and gold. The color is pleasing — I take joy to look at it. It is made more pleasing by all varieties of tone, produced partly by the different colors of the leaves, partly by the variation in density of the foliage. Moreover, the tree has a form that pleases. I say it is symmetrical but not rigid or angular. And it adds to the charms of color and form the charm of motion, or changing form. The wind is stirring among its leaves, and there is at once a general unity of movement as the gentle westerly breeze sways the whole tree slowly to one side, and infinite

diversity of movement among its myriad leaves —and every movement, I say, is graceful. The tree I pronounce a beautiful thing. Its color and form perceived together produce in me a peculiar emotion which seems to me simple and ultimate. Whatever be the processes of evolution by which this perception has become possible, whatever explanation of it may be found in physiological adaptations, I am not conscious of any need of explanation or analysis. Here I seem to have the emotion of beauty in its simplest and most isolated form, having no connection with moral quality, conduct, or human action in any way. But now I lift my eyes from the tree and let my vision take in the whole broad-lying landscape visible from my window. Here is multiplicity of details which, nevertheless, I can perceive as a whole—the long, high horizon line, rising just in front of me into the broadly rounded solidity of a mountain; the russet clad slopes of the eastern hills that border a river; the broad expanse of the river, lying like a quiet lake, bluer by far than the sky overhead; sloping fields, dotted here and there with farmhouses; and below and in front the roofs of the city among the fast thinning foliage of the trees. And as I look, again I exclaim, Beautiful! But the emotion I now have, if compared with that I felt when looking at the tree, I notice is not only deeper but much more complex. The delight of color and form and motion

is in it; but there is much more. The imagination has plainly entered; and the office of the imagination (as we shall see later) is to multiply pleasurable suggestions. Other experiences are vaguely called up. The mountain yonder reminds me of the one I saw in front of Wordsworth's house, or of Soracte that Horace sings; it calls halfway back to memory a thousand things I have read or heard of mountains, evoking a throng of vague but pleasing reminiscences. Moreover, and more important, I am conscious that it has some power akin to moral suggestion, a hint of repose, calm strength, restful power. The river seems to mean peace. The scattered houses dotting the distant hillside, with here and there a wreath of curling smoke, suggest home-life and love and quiet. Thus a myriad suggestions and half-formed memories are blended in my emotion now, yet the total effect I call beautiful.

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and spiritual things. Quiet, for instance, is both a mental and a physical state; and whatever physical thing is manifestly steadfast and immovable may suggest, and hence inspire, calmness and repose of spirit. The mountain *does*, as Wordsworth says,—

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language whereby spiritual qualities are expressed in sensible forms. This theory is open to the fatal objection that it explains the simple and ultimate feeling by the complex and derivative; yet undeniably all the higher and more developed forms of the sense of beauty are made up largely of moral elements.

But without attempting further the difficult task of stating with precision the characteristics of those objects we call beautiful or of the emotions they awaken, we may confidently affirm that it is impossible to resolve the multitude of feelings that literature may use, into forms of the sense of beauty, without arbitrarily giving to the phrase a meaning far wider than the most careful usage will warrant.

Perhaps a deeper and broader, if somewhat more indefinite, characterization of the literary emotions may be found in the statement that they are all forms of our sympathy with life. Whatever life is, to our knowledge it is the sum of our powers as we know them in action. When they act without weakness or hindrance, we call that pleasure; the more of them act, and the more easily they act, the more life we actually seem to have,—and the more life, the more pleasure. Whatever enhances our sense of life gives us pleasure; whatever seems to diminish or threaten it, gives us pain. Now possibly the various sources and occasions of literary or artistic

feeling may find an ultimate ground of agreement in that they all have the power by some sort of sympathy to stimulate and enhance this sense of life. For example, our admiration for power is a kind of feeling that we too have a sympathetic, at least an imaginative, share in the power we admire. Power of any sort is, therefore, always an object of admiration unless it limits or diminishes our safety, when our admiration changes to fear. So the sense of beauty, discussed on a previous page, seems always to imply in some way a new and thrilling sense of conscious life—a "vital feeling of delight." Love and joy in all their forms are still more evidently emotions that quicken our activities and enlarge our sense of life. Our deepest moral emotions, also, as of justice, veneration, and religious aspiration, bear witness to our unconquerable feeling of a life superior to physical relations, that imposes law upon all actions but will not itself be limited or confined. And those vague, indefinable emotions, which are often, however, most intense, as on hearing music, on seeing a landscape at some peculiar moment, on seeing men and women in a throng or in any such circumstances as to thrust the conception of humanity forcibly upon us—seeing a mother suckle her infant in a graveyard, for instance, to take a picture from a French writer—any of those states of feeling which seem to be made up largely of dim, indeterminate

desire after something higher, purer, sweeter; states of feeling which have always some tinge of sadness in them yet are not painful,—these would seem to be deep stirrings within us of that restless, unsatisfied spiritual life. It is in such moments that we become most thrillingly aware how real and intense is our life, how keen its ardors and its longings.

But leaving this discussion of the nature of artistic feeling, which more properly belongs to the science of æsthetics, let us turn to the more practical question of criticism, How shall we measure and estimate this most important element in literature? And here, before answering this question in detail, we should notice that a transient power to awaken emotion of a certain quality in a great many people is no proof of literary value. In other words, popularity—*i.e.* widespread emotional interest—is no sure indication of permanence. Indeed, just the opposite is usually, though not universally, true. For such popularity usually arises from one or another of three causes, neither of which is consistent with the highest literary quality.

1. The first of these is *novelty*, either in matter or manner. Anything striking or *outré;* any new motive; any freakish or morbid psychology; any hitherto unexplored region, geographical or spiritual; any curiosities of dialect or structure—may

give a book great currency for a time. But the work that has no higher claim upon immortality than this power to stir curiosity, though it may be the fad of a year or possibly the fashion of a generation, will inevitably drop into oblivion.

2. A book is often widely popular because it represents some contemporary movement, economic, political, or religious. It is a kind of campaign document. This is often the case with works of fiction. No kind of argument is so effective as a taking novel, and nothing else affords such excellent facilities for begging the question. The novelist can bend recalcitrant facts to his theory, create both characters and circumstances; and if he be ingenious, he will be able to give to the most hopeless doctrine a plausible dress of fact. Those who are in sympathy with the movement represented will rejoice to see it so vividly illustrated—that is what they call "showing truth in the guise of fiction"; those who are opposed to the movement will be interested, though irritated, to see what plausible circumstance may be invented to support falsity—that is what *they* call "arraying fiction in the garb of truth"; while a great many people who know and care little about the movement will be attracted by the catchy story, and wonder indolently whether there "isn't something in it, after all." And everybody will read it.

Occasionally a book represents some movement

not merely local or even national, but almost world-wide. Such a book may attain not only vast temporary popularity but a permanent historical interest quite out of proportion to its literary merit. The most popular book ever written in America is Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was translated into twenty different languages and went through the civilized world like wildfire. For *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared in 1852, when an aggressive humanitarian sentiment was showing itself not only in the anti-slavery agitation in America but in the revolutionary temper that accompanied and followed the risings of '48 all over Europe, when men could almost hear

"Far along the world-wide whisper of the south-wind rushing warm,
With the standards of the peoples plunging thro' the thunder-storm."

But a work of literature in the service of any special reform is likely to be of only temporary interest. If the reform succeeds and the measures advocated become a part of the admitted constitution of society, then the books written to further these measures come to have little more than an historical or antiquarian interest; if the reform fails, the books will be proved false by the logic of events and will be forgotten.

3. But the surest recipe for popularity is an attractive mediocrity. For the mass of people bow

respectfully to the great books — and never read them. The book that is immediately and widely popular is almost sure to be "light reading." A great book may indeed be *easy* reading, simply because it so rouses our emotions and stimulates our intellect that our powers work upon it earnestly and gladly — it inspires the energy with which we read it; but no great book can be "light reading." It cannot be read while half our wits are asleep or wool-gathering on some other subject, or while half our emotions are engaged to another theme It demands all our powers. It will, therefore, be voted too hard by the million. One may question, in passing, whether the enormous diffusion of mediocre writing in recent years, especially in the form of fiction and periodical publications, while it has enlarged the reading public, has not at the same time relaxed the mental fibre of the readers and increased their disinclination to any more serious literature. But it goes without saying that writing such as this, which only stirs a lukewarm sentiment and never gives the reader the trouble of thinking, cannot live; it is simply pushed into oblivion by the ever succeeding volume of the same kind of stuff.)

Disregarding, then, that transient and superficial power over emotion which is termed popularity,(let us inquire by what tests the permanent value of the emotional effect of literature may be measured Of such tests we may name five, as follows: —

1. The justice or propriety of the emotion.
2. The vividness or power of the emotion.
3. The continuity or steadiness of the emotion.
4. The range or variety of the emotion.
5. The rank or quality of the emotion.

These we will proceed to consider.

1. By calling an emotion *just* or *appropriate* we mean that there is good cause for it. Emotion of a worthy type may have slight literary value simply because it has no adequate ground. Thus, says Ruskin, "energetic admiration may be excited by a display of fireworks, or a street of handsome shops; but the feeling is not poetical, because the grounds of it are false, and therefore ignoble. There is in reality nothing to *deserve* admiration either in the firing of packets of gunpowder or in the display of the stocks of warehouses. But admiration excited by the budding of a flower *is* a poetic feeling, because it is impossible that this manifestation of spiritual power and vital beauty can ever be enough admired."[1] In estimating a book the question is always legitimate, Is the emotion which this book excites healthy? Is it derived from adequate causes, intrinsic in the book itself? For it is quite possible, as stated on a previous page, that a book may excite for a time strong emotion by causes that are not genuine and permanent, especially if it can avail itself of some abnormal current of pop-

[1] "Modern Painters," Part IV, ch. I, § 13.

ular feeling. Thus, for example, Byron's series of romantic poems written between 1813 and 1818, *The Corsair, Lara, The Giaour, The Bride of Abydos, The Siege of Corinth,* not only were immensely popular, but they really scored a deep mark in the feeling of all classes. And yet on reflection men have seen, for the last fifty years, that there was no adequate cause in the poems for this emotional effect. Their incidents are simply those of the penny dreadful, the adventures of impossible romantic pirates and desperadoes, beauty and butchery, blood and moonlight. The whole thing is false; there never were any such people and there never could be. While as to the real Conrads and Laras, how *they* love, and engender, and adulterize, and poison, and stab is no earthly matter to us. The actions and motives the poet *attributes to his persons are false, the sentiments* he puts in their mouths for the most part impossible and altogether unhealthy. The estimate of these poems, accordingly, has inevitably declined, and they are now little read. A somewhat similar charge, though to a much less degree and in a very different way, may be brought against some of the poetry of Shelley. Here the emotional effect of the verse is keen and exquisite, but we have to admit that it has no clear rational warrant. There seem to be no ideas under it. Such a poem as the *Epipsychidion* is the utterance of intense [illegible]n that thrills us with a kind of poignant

and we hardly know why. There are those, indeed, who hold this power to be a high reach of art; but it would seem rather, not an excellence, but a defect in Shelley's work that its intense emotion has no more tangible basis in healthy human experience.

All forms of sentimentalism in literature result from the endeavor to excite the emotions of pathos or affection without adequate cause. These emotions are always pleasurable, and when, as in literature, they cost nothing in effort, there is a natural temptation to indulge them on slight warrant or to a disproportionate degree. Hence the popular power of the sentimentalist. But our sounder judgment recognizes that emotions thus easily aroused, or consciously indulged for their own sake, have something hollow about them. We cannot use our deeper and truer feelings merely to coddle and titillate ourselves with. The sentimentalist may exhibit his emotion in its more pronounced form, and angle for our sympathy by dwelling upon all the accidents of external manifestation; but the truer artist does not hold his own feelings so cheap, and the emotion he excites in us is grounded upon deep truths of human life. Dickens paints the death-bed of Paul Dombey or Little Nell, touch after touch, with conscious and skillful accumulation of moving circumstances. Wordsworth says simply of the old huntsman who pauses at his cottage door a moment before he joins the hunt, —

"Perhaps to himself at that moment he said,
'The key I must take, for my Ellen is dead';
But of this in my ears not a word did he speak,
And he went to the chase with a tear on his cheek."

Both writers touch our emotion, and the same emotion; but the pathos of the one is a little suggestive of the undertaker, dwelling on "the trappings and the suits of woe"; while the pathos of the other has the reserve and reticence that bespeak deep grief. It would be universally admitted that Wordsworth's art here is better than that of Dickens. Few poets, indeed, have ever had in so high degree as Wordsworth the power to exhibit deep emotion in simple incident or homely character.

It is to be remarked that the *occasion* of emotion may often be trivial, but not the cause. In the lines just quoted the occasion of the emotion is the trivial fact that the old man stops to lock the door of his empty house and takes the key; but this action is enough to give us a glimpse into his lonely heart — and there is the *cause* of our emotion. Generally, it is a proof of high imaginative power so completely to realize a character or a passion as to see intuitively how it would express itself in slight and otherwise unmeaning acts. The appeal to our sympathy is thus rendered more effective because it seems unintentional.

We may, then, affirm as a universal rule, that, in order to be of high or permanent literary value,

emotion must spring from deep and worthy cause, and that when this rule is violated the feeling excited by any work of art or letters is sure to be morbid, or declamatory, or sentimental, or in some other way false.)

2. That the literary value of emotion is measured by its *Vividness* or *Power*) is so obvious as perhaps hardly to need statement. But however obvious it may be — a truism if you like — this is at once the most natural and the most undeniable test of literature. Does it move you? Does it stimulate, arouse, thrill, enlarge? Does it seem for the moment to give you new vision to see and new heart to feel? If it does this, your book is literature; and, other things being equal, the more intensely it does this, the greater literature is it. "Books," says Emerson, "are for nothing but to inspire."

The terms *vividness* and *power* might seem to apply rather to the active emotions than to the passive, to the passions rather than to deep and quiet states of feeling. Yet these latter may be as truly powerful as the former. In such poetry as the following, for example, the emotion is certainly as deep, the hush and silence brought upon our spirits as compelling as any more aggressive or passionate type of feeling could be.

> "Earth has not anything to show more fair:
> Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
> A sight so touching in its majesty:

This City now doth like a garment wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour valley, rock, or hill;
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep,
And all that mighty heart is lying still."

It must be admitted that it is impossible to find any exact common measure for different kinds of emotion. How shall one compare pathos that is tender and pitiful with pathos that is stern and silent —Ophelia with Othello—and say that one is more powerful than the other? Still less can we find any common measure for the emotions of pathos and of sublimity or of exquisite beauty. Then there are forms of emotion arising from reflection, from the perception of deep or wide truth, that would seem at first to have little power because they are quiet and are rooted, so to say, in thought: but if less thrilling they are often the most profound of all. Such a poem as Wordsworth's great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* may be cited as an example; it is not impassioned but august, yet perhaps no other modern poem moves a greater volume of feeling. Moreover, much depends upon individual temperament. One man is constitutionally more sensitive to one type of emotion, and another to another. So that it may be readil

admitted that no estimate of the power of emotional effects can serve as a nice test of comparative excellence. Yet it remains true that, whatever the type of emotion and whatever its cause — whether some aspect of nature, some act of man, or some truth — in any case it is always intelligible to speak of the intensity or power of the emotion; and it is certain that the value of the writing is measured very largely by this.

This intensity of effect in most instances depends primarily upon the nature of the writer. He must feel deeply himself or he cannot expect to make us feel deeply. Hence a certain force of temperament, a richness and volume of emotion, is a requisite of any really great writer. Sometimes a man in many respects richly endowed fails of any high place in letters because he lacks this inner force. That was the case, for instance, with Cowper. He had nice sensibilities, a quick eye for beauty, a graceful humor, a delicate gift of phrase; but he lacked power. He seemed not fully alive. Addison is another example of a man long accounted a master and model, who nevertheless failed of any permanent leadership because of this lack of vigor. It was excellently said of him by Johnson, "He thinks justly, but he thinks *feebly.*" On the other hand, we frequently see a poet whose influence seems to come almost entirely from the passionate intensity of his nature. Byron is a good example. There is very little truth in Byron's work: his

characters are nothing — mere photographs of his own postures; his action is largely melodrama; his workmanship is often hurried and slovenly to the last degree; and yet Byron impressed himself upon his generation as no one else could. The sheer force of his personality, perverse, unhealthy, but intense, burned his work into men's minds. The emotion was for the most part not sane or well-grounded, and his work, therefore, has largely lost its interest; but for a time it had immense power.

We are not, however, to think that emotion the strongest which is most demonstrative and turbulent; indeed turbulence and confusion usually imply some lack of self-command, or some derangement of faculty. The emotion really the deepest is often the stillest, —

> "Such a tide as, moving, seems asleep,
> Too full for sound and foam."

The ideal poet's nature, with respect to the point now under consideration, is full, intense, passionate, but steady; a nature of strong passion under the control of a strong will — such a soul as

> "Loves to have his sails filled with a lusty wind
> Even till his masts drink water and his keel ploughs air,"

and yet is obedient to the helm of an iron will. That, one thinks, is the kind of man Shakspere was.

Doubtless also this power to stir our emotions

depends, to some degree, upon an author's gifts of expression. The whole matter of Form must be discussed in a later chapter; but it may be said here that, while a man can usually express with *clearness* what lies clear in his own mind, it does not by any means follow that he can express it with *force.* That is, he may be able to utter his thought, but quite unable to utter the emotion which the thought excites in his own mind. There are doubtless many natures of strong feeling without a corresponding gift of expression. There are poets, and really great poets, whose gift of utterance seems manifestly in no wise adequate to the volume of poetic emotion they have to utter. There could be no better example of this than Robert Browning. At his best, Browning has power over our love and pity, our aspirations and longings, such as no other poet of the last two generations could command; but, on the other hand, a good part of his poetry never seems to get at our emotions, for lack of power to utter it aright. And every student of Browning must be persuaded that Browning himself feels most profoundly some portions of his work which he scarcely makes his readers feel at all. Had his gift of expression been proportionate to his other endowments, the verdicts of his most extravagant admirers might have been justified — he might have been the greatest English poet since Shakspere.

What has been said thus far of this quality of

the emotion which literature excites may have seemed to refer to poetry exclusively, as all our illustrations have been drawn from that. But in fact vividness or power of emotion is no less certainly one criterion of excellence in prose literature. In most forms of prose, indeed, the element of emotion is not the primary purpose of the writing, and is therefore relatively less important than the element of thought. Yet everywhere in prose writing what we call force, energy, vigor, vivacity, brilliancy, are only names for this incidental power to stir various emotions. Nowhere, except in purely scientific writing — which is not literature, and admits no literary virtues except clearness — is this effect upon the emotions needless or out of place. It is this which explains the mastery of any great prose writer, of a Burke or a Swift. Their means of influence may be very different. In Burke's case it would seem to be the largeness of the thought that moves us, the imposing and often imaginative way in which its real proportions are thrown up before our view; in Swift's work the thought is simple, sometimes of secondary value, but the intense, strenuous, almost rude vigor of the man is pushed directly upon us; it is an immense, overmastering will that confronts us, and commands our admiration for its power and mass. Similarly we call historical writing brilliant or powerful when the men and events portrayed touch our sympathy as they would if we saw them here and

now. A brilliant history can give us the same kind of emotion that a drama does; and the more nearly this emotional effect approximates in amount or degree to that we derive, for example, from one of Shakspere's historical plays, the more brilliant and, other things being equal, the greater will the history be. Few historical dramas ever written can arouse or thrill like Carlyle's *French Revolution*. Other things being equal, I say, the more brilliant the history the greater; but of course it is to be understood that brilliancy or power is not the primary virtue in historical writing. We estimate a history first by its truth to facts and its justice of opinion. And vividness of emotional effect would become a hindrance to this prime purpose of the history, if the emotions excited were ill-grounded, or partial, or tended to obscure the truth. Not that a vivid emotional realization of the facts of history is any necessary hindrance to a correct judgment upon them; on the contrary, Carlyle is nearer right in his opinion that the reader at least cannot frame an impartial judgment upon the men and actions of the past until he has felt himself in intimate sympathy with them. But it is true that the sensitive, emotional temperament is not infrequently lacking in cool judicial power. Mr. Froude may serve as an example; he was a very brilliant historian, but not always a very safe one.

3. The third test of the literary value of emo-

tion, *Continuity* or *Steadiness*, is akin to that just discussed, though somewhat different. We like to have the emotional effect of any writing, or indeed of any work of art which is prolonged, like music, *sustained*. If our feeling at any point is allowed to drop quite down to the normal level of commonplace, we not only lose just so much emotional effect, but we experience an unpleasant sense of discord, which is in itself a positive fault. Sometimes this lack of power to sustain emotion is seen in sudden, brief lapses within the compass of a line or two. If he be a poet, the writer drops down into prose for a little. If the slip is sudden and violent, the author falling lowest just at the instant when he ought to mount highest, the effect is often humorous — a sudden summersault over that dangerous brink of incongruity which separates the sublime, not only from the pathetic, but from the ridiculous. Addison's once famous play of *Cato* furnishes amusing examples of this "Alas!" says Marcia to her friend Lucia, who is over-cold toward a lover, —

> "Alas! poor youth, how canst thou throw him from thee!
> Unhappy youth! how will thy coldness raise
> Tempests and storms in his afflicted bosom!
> *I dread the consequence!*"

Lucia, overtaken by calamities calls out, —

> "Alas! too late I find myself involved
> In endless griefs and labyrinths of woe —
> *Born to afflict my Marcia's family!*"

"Portius," cries Lucia, —

> "I swear, to heaven I swear,
> Never to mix my plighted hands with thine
> While such a cloud of mischiefs hangs about us,
> But to forget our loves, and drive thee out
> From all my thoughts, — *as far as I am able!*"

Wordsworth now and then has passages of unconscious humor of this sort, though his lapses are not usually quite so steep or sudden. His inspiration seems to give out. He shuts off his light and heat, and leaves us chilly and stumbling among commonplace perhaps for pages, when suddenly we meet again the light that never was on land or sea.

Now every work of art should have a certain unity of feeling. There is, of course, at the same time need of variety. To continue the same emotion, at the same pitch, for any great length of time, would be impossible if the emotion were intense, and intolerably monotonous if it were not. That is simply not natural: our feelings will not act in that way. There must be in any work of art flux and reflux of emotion, light and shade; yet, to continue the musical metaphor, while the composition cannot be in every part at the same pitch, it must all be in the same key. It must nowhere drop out of the emotional mood altogether. There must be no passages through which the writer seems to be patiently plodding, intent only upon his facts or truths, and forgetful that it is his duty to recommend those facts and

truths in some way to our literary sensibility. For it is quite possible so to vary and combine emotions as to sustain the whole composition, even though a long and varied one, in the same emotional key throughout. There could hardly be a better example of this than any one of Shakspere's great plays. What infinite variety of effects! And yet all these effects are brought into harmony with the dominant tone of the play; and at no point is the interest lowered by mere needless narrative or dry moralizing. Shakspere has all manner of violation of the formal laws of unity, but he never fails to observe this one essential unity,—the unity of feeling. Consider any one of his plays—*Romeo and Juliet*, for example—and see how the emotion of the reader is sustained throughout, and sustained in the same dominant key. Everything is youth and ardor, summer and bloom and fragrance—intense, poignant, rapturous, infinite in longings and ecstasies.

It is this necessity for sustaining the emotion in literary work that is at the basis of all rhetorical rules for unity. We are told that nothing should be introduced into a work of art which is irrelevant to its main purpose; but then, the question arises, What *is* irrelevant? And that question is best answered by affirming that only to be irrelevant which interrupts or lowers the emotional effect of the work, or turns it into another mood altogether. A great deal of digression, episode, or other

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matter not permitted by strict laws of structural unity, will be pardoned if only the interest is not allowed to flag, and if the emotions these passages excite are in harmony with the rest of the work. On the other hand, anything, however valuable in itself, however true or beautiful, that allows the emotional interest to drop, or, what really comes to the same thing, tends to arouse emotions inconsistent with the main current of feeling in the work, must be removed.

Such failure to produce sustained and continuous emotion in the reader arises usually from the fact that the writer's own emotions are not steady, and often are not intense enough. He does not realize his subject as a whole, and at every point, but only at its most striking or impressive points. Consequently he drops into commonplace here and there; or, what is perhaps worse, recognizing the necessity of sustained effect, he tries to make up for the lack of genuine feeling by labored and inapt efforts to excite feeling that he does not himself share; the result is "fine writing," carefully elaborated imagery out of harmony with the sentiment, or some other form of literary insincerity.

Of course it is in the more extended forms of literature that this demand for sustained emotion is at once most necessary and most difficult. In shorter forms, like the lyric, the emotion will probably be sustained, but may be feeble. The

lyric is the literary form in which intense, concentrated emotion most naturally utters itself, since such emotion is of necessity short-lived. It has been said sometimes that, for this reason, all true poetry is of the nature of lyric; that any considerable degree of emotion, requisite to poetry of a high order, cannot be long continued. A long poem, said Edgar Allan Poe, is a contradiction in terms. But in opposition to all such verdicts, it has always been held not only that there are long poems, but that those are the greatest poets who have written the long poems; that the highest reach of ability is shown in this power to carry a temper of elevated or profound feeling throughout a long work. The epic may not be so popular a form as the lyric, but it is a higher. Dante, Spenser, Milton, are greater masters than the lyrist, however beautiful or thrilling his work. So the great dramatist or the really great novelist commands our admiration in part because he can maintain his powers throughout a long and varied work.

4. Evidently the value of any work of literature must depend to a considerable degree upon the *Range* or *Variety* of its emotional effects. Great range of power is a very rare endowment. A man may attain high eminence in letters without it—Milton, for example. It is rare, indeed, to find even great breadth of appreciation. Few are the literary critics who, like James Russell

Lowell, can show a range of critical perception wide enough to enjoy to the full and thus estimate with equal justice two such antithetically different poets as Dante and Dryden. Most of us cannot claim to have a catholic taste; we do not enjoy a wide range of literary excellence, often cannot appreciate it when it is pointed out to us. How seldom, for instance, can a man be found who has any hearty enjoyment of both Pope and Shelley.[1] And if the power to appreciate widely different emotional effects be thus limited, still more limited, of course, is the power to produce them. For the power to produce those emotional effects upon which literature de-

[1] It is worth while to remark, parenthetically, that if we do not enjoy anything we should never profess that we do, either from motives of vanity or a commendable desire to widen our perceptions and bring ourselves into sympathy with those who see what we cannot. Such a profession is as dangerous to taste as to morals. For if we begin by misrepresenting and sophisticating our taste we shall end by having no taste of our *own* at all, but only a flaccid dependence upon the dicta of other people. A familiar and homely example of the way in which taste may be so subordinated to fashion as to be practically annulled may be seen in the case of woman's dress. Whatever is the mode looks well to us, simply because our liking has come to be dependent not at all on any laws of beauty but on arbitrary caprice. An old fashion plate looks ugly, though it very likely conforms as nearly to any laws of beauty in form and color as the costume of the next lady you meet. In one whole department of what might be art, taste has abdicated in favor of fashion. So that a statue of a woman in ordinary dress of to-day would be absurd, and no painter even dares to paint a portrait of a lady in any accentuated form of the mode of the period.

pends, presupposes, as we have seen, a certain vigor and intensity of nature; and that, as a rule, is not to be expected in a wide range of subjects. To say nothing of the lack of that breadth of personal experience which is requisite to a great range of emotional effect, most men's powers work at their best only within rather narrow limits. Intensity of interest in one direction usually implies a corresponding withdrawal of interest from other directions. In fact, intensity anywhere usually implies something of narrowness. Too often a symmetrical, broadly perceptive, tolerant character is deficient in the personal force necessary to produce decided literary effect; while, on the other hand, those men whose personality seems most pronounced and strenuous, who have scored the deepest mark in the literature of their time, are often men whose limitations are most strongly marked. Carlyle, for example. The range of emotional effects he could produce is very limited; but within those limits his power is resistless. Most lyrical poets — whose work should be concentrated and intense — have a mastery of only one or two moods. The very high rank of Burns depends, in great part, on the fact that he could command a wider range of emotion than most lyrists; humor in almost all its varieties save the cynical, pathos in several forms, love when young and passionate, personal independence and the competence of the individual, patriotism — Burns has sung them all.

The lyrical work of Shelley, on the other hand, though it has an exquisiteness of manner and a keen, though vague, emotional rapture such as Burns can never reach, is all in one or another of two or three keys.

It is the dramatist and the novelist who most need this command of a wide range of emotional effects; since their work, unlike that of the lyrical poet, is not subjective, but aims rather to give a broad, impartial picture of the life of men. Yet the field of most novelists seems not very wide. Any popular master of fiction usually will be found to have only one or two things he can do well, only one or two types of character he knows well. The same types are constantly recurring; so that you could take a personage out of a novel, substitute the corresponding personage from another novel, change no essential circumstances of the plot, and produce the same effect. One favorite novelist is said to have only two young women; indeed, many eminent novelists have hardly more. Dickens may be said without much exaggeration to have drawn but one nice young lady, though he has a somewhat larger variety of young ladies not so nice, and a still larger company of odd, middle-aged folk. George Eliot repeatedly introduced the same type of character, under different names, with only slight variations: thus Hetty, and Tessa, and Rosamond Vincy are not essentially different in nature. And if the novelist write with a purpose, if he is aiming

to enforce any truth or advance any cause, this didactic intention is likely to narrow still further the range of his literary effects. That, indeed, is one objection not only to the purpose-novel, but to the intrusion of a marked didactic tendency in any literature. Those writers have usually the widest range who are most purely objective and impersonal, who seem to view life impartially with a view only to recording or interpreting it. Walter Scott's claim to high place rests largely upon this objective breadth of work. He is, doubtless, somewhat lacking in force, in emotional intensity and moral earnestness; he does not seem to feel very deeply on any subject and does not, therefore, make us feel deeply. But in his novels — not in his poetry — he has created a large number of really different characters, invented a remarkable variety of incident and situation, and has, therefore, touched a correspondingly wide range of emotion. Of course the supreme example of breadth is Shakspere. The more we read, the more that wonder grows. His was not, to be sure, a universal mind. Wide as was his comprehension, there were types of character he could not conceive, motives for action he could not appreciate, sources of feeling he could not command. It may be doubted, for example, whether such a character as that of Shelley could ever have entered the study of his imagination. Nor, though he lived in an age of religious ferment, does there seem to be any person in his world who is animated

throughout by distinctly religious motives. Yet the marvel remains that he has imagined a wider variety of characters, has created more independent, self-centred, clearly individualized men and women, has sympathized intimately with a wider range of passion, and so touched more springs of feeling than any other writer that ever lived. He can, doubtless, be surpassed by some one at every other point but this; here he is unrivalled and alone.

5. The estimate of literature, as determined by its power over the emotions, depends, lastly, upon the *Rank* or *Quality* of the emotions. Here we touch questions upon which there has been much critical debate. For to say that literary values depend upon the quality or rank of the emotions to which appeal is made is, of course, to imply that there is a higher and lower among these emotions. But if this is admitted, what is the standard? What kind of emotions shall we call the higher, and what the lower? It is on this question that critics are by no means agreed. It would seem obvious that we do instinctively rank some emotions higher in kind than others. All the feelings to which literature may make appeal are, indeed, in some sense, "noble"—as Mr. Ruskin calls them; but some are better entitled to this designation than others. We say it is but "a step from the sublime to the ridiculous," implying that it is a step *down*. The sublime and the ridiculous

are both legitimate emotions in literature; but everybody recognizes that they are of different value. So the emotion which arises from the purely formal element in literature, from its music and rhythm, is a legitimate emotion, — the effect of poetry very largely depends upon it. Yet it is undeniably of lower rank than the emotion arising from the meaning or content of the verse. Is not Coleridge's *Kubla Khan*, written in an opium-dream and without any clear or coherent meaning but with a ravishing music, a lower order of poetry than Wordsworth's *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality?* And is it not lower principally because the emotions it excites are not only different in kind but inferior in rank? This would seem undeniable. Yet now and then a critic is so far committed to a narrowly æsthetic theory of poetry as to uphold a proposition almost the opposite of this. For instance, Mr. Walter Pater, in a very interesting essay,[1] holds that *music* is the most typical of all arts, because music — as we have already noticed — appeals to the emotions directly without meaning anything; and all the other arts, he contends, poetry included, aspire toward this condition of music, and approach perfection just in the degree that they approximate this ideal, losing definite significance for the intelligence and touching the

[1] "The School of Giorgione," originally printed in *The Fortnightly Review*, October, 1887.

emotions immediately. Thus he says: "Lyrical poetry . . . is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to *depend in part on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires* or reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding." But it would seem that this is carrying the rules and standards that belong to one art over into another, where they do not apply. In opposition to all such views, the sane good sense of the world demands as a first requisite of poetry or any other form of literature that it mean something; and insists that all musical or other formal qualities, however needful, are subordinate and accessory, and that the emotion excited by such qualities is of lower rank than that flowing directly from the thought or passion of the work. If, then, any poetry derives its only or its chief power over our emotions from such rhythmical or formal qualities,—as, let us say, some of Swinburne's does,—that poetry cannot be of the highest rank.

There are forms of literature that produce their effects chiefly by reproducing in memory or imagination pleasurable sensation. Literature may represent in this way the pleasures of any of the senses, even of touch and taste. But as there is an order in the dignity of the senses, touch and taste having less suggestive power and being as a

rule sensations that cannot be shared with others, the poetry that derives its charm from the representation of these sensations would not be felt to be of high rank. Passages in considerable numbers might be quoted from Keats, like this familiar one, exquisite in their way, but too exclusively concerned with the pleasures of the lower senses to rank as very great poetry.

> "And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
> In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
> While he from forth the closet brought a heap
> Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
> Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
> From Fez, and spiced dainties, every one,
> From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon."

And even here it will be noticed how Keats, lest his dainties should smack too much of the confectioner's, appeals to our higher senses and imagination in that last lovely line, which opens all the bright, wide East. So, too, when literature reproduces the pleasures of sight and hearing, if it stop with the sensuous charm, if it have no further spiritual suggestiveness, by general admission the emotions it excites are not of the highest rank. The beauty of the natural world, for instance, may be disclosed with very great vividness before the imagination, but with little or no

> "Remoter charm by thought supplied."

emotions immediately. Thus he says: "Lyrical poetry . . . is, at least artistically, the highest and most complete form of poetry. And the very perfection of such poetry often seems to *depend in part on a certain suppression or vagueness of mere subject, so that the definite meaning almost expires* or reaches us through ways not distinctly traceable by the understanding." But it would seem that this is carrying the rules and standards that belong to one art over into another, where they do not apply. In opposition to all such views, the sane good sense of the world demands as a first requisite of poetry or any other form of literature that it mean something; and insists that all musical or other formal qualities, however needful, are subordinate and accessory, and that the emotion excited by such qualities is of lower rank than that flowing directly from the thought or passion of the work. If, then, any poetry derives its only or its chief power over our emotions from such rhythmical or formal qualities, — as, let us say, some of Swinburne's does, — that poetry cannot be of the highest rank.

There are forms of literature that produce their effects chiefly by reproducing in memory or imagination pleasurable sensation. Literature may represent in this way the pleasures of any of the senses, even of touch and taste. But as there is an order in the dignity of the senses, touch and taste having less suggestive power and being as a

rule sensations that cannot be shared with others, the poetry that derives its charm from the representation of these sensations would not be felt to be of high rank. Passages in considerable numbers might be quoted from Keats, like this familiar one, exquisite in their way, but too exclusively concerned with the pleasures of the lower senses to rank as very great poetry.

> "And still she slept an azure-lidded sleep
> In blanched linen, smooth, and lavender'd,
> While he from forth the closet brought a heap
> Of candied apple, quince, and plum, and gourd;
> With jellies soother than the creamy curd,
> And lucent syrups, tinct with cinnamon;
> Manna and dates, in argosy transferr'd
> From Fez, and spiced dainties, every one,
> From silken Samarcand to cedared Lebanon."

And even here it will be noticed how Keats, lest his dainties should smack too much of the confectioner's, appeals to our higher senses and imagination in that last lovely line, which opens all the bright, wide East. So, too, when literature reproduces the pleasures of sight and hearing, if it stop with the sensuous charm, if it have no further spiritual suggestiveness, by general admission the emotions it excites are not of the highest rank. The beauty of the natural world, for instance, may be disclosed with very great vividness before the imagination, but with little or no

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Keats again would furnish us numerous examples of this. 'No English poet ever surpassed him in the power to bring before the imagination beautiful pictures of the world of sense for their own sake, simply because they *are* beautiful. Thus to render for us at once the sensuous beauty of the world and the poet's own keen sense of delight in it, is, we may admit, a rare gift. Yet if we compare the emotion derived from poetry of this kind, however exquisite, with that derived, let us say, from reading a great tragedy of Shakspere, is it not evident that there is a difference between them which we cannot better describe than by saying it is a difference in *rank?* Nor need we go to such widely contrasted examples to feel this difference. The emotional value of such purely sensuous nature-poetry as that of Keats is certainly of a lower rank than that of Wordsworth's best verse, in which the external charm of nature is informed with some spiritual power and significance.

The ground of the distinction is manifest. Emotions excited by moral qualities, or by the moral suggestions of material things, are higher in rank than those excited by purely material or sensible things. More briefly, moral emotion is of higher literary value than purely sensuous or æsthetic emotion. Admiration for a heroic action, a great passion, a sublime endurance, is nobler in kind, and so worth more in literature, than admiration for sensuous loveliness, however exquisitely felt or ex-

pressed. The term *moral emotion* is used here, not in its narrowest sense as the emotion flowing from the approval of an act as right or its disapproval as wrong, but in its wider meaning, as the emotion excited by the qualities, action, or character of moral beings, the emotion which is some form of our sympathy with life. Matthew Arnold, in one of his most familiar essays, uses the word in exactly the sense here given to it. Having said that English poetry deals preëminently with moral ideas, he continues: "A large sense is of course to be given to the term *moral*. Whatever bears upon the question 'how to live' comes under it.

"'Nor love thy life, nor hate; but, what thou liv'st
Live well; how long or short, permit to heaven.'

In those fine lines Milton utters, as every one at once perceives, a moral idea. Yes, but so, too, when Keats consoles the forward-bending lover on the Grecian Urn, the lover arrested and presented in immortal relief by the sculptor's hand before he can kiss, with the line—

"'Forever wilt thou love and she be fair'—

he utters a moral idea. When Shakspere says that

"'We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep,'

he utters a moral idea."[1]

[1] "Wordsworth," *Essays in Criticism*, Second Series.

We may lay it down as a rule, then, that those emotions which are intimately related to the conduct of life are of higher rank than those which are not; and that, consequently, the emotions highest of all are those related to the deciding forces of life, the affections and the conscience. There is no surer test of the permanent worth of a book than this — Does it move our sympathy with the deepest things of human life? If it does not, whatever other virtues it may have, it is not great literature.

If this be true, the highest literature must always have a distinctly ethical character. And it has; not a didactic, but an ethical character. Other things being equal, that literature must be the best which excites such emotions as tend to invigorate and enlarge our nature — in a word, healthy emotions. We must dissent entirely from those critics who would measure literature, as well as art, by its power to give an order of pleasures with which, as they claim, morality has nothing to do. The maxim "Art for Art's sake" is meaningless, and is employed usually as an apology for a weak or licentious art. Art exists not for its own sake, but to minister to the pleasures of man; and that art certainly is highest which ministers to the highest pleasures. It is folly, therefore, to set up a purely unmoral standard for art, or to expect any wide range of artistic excellence without regard to ethical conditions. Whoever tries to do that is pretty sure to descend to the use of lower or coarser artis-

tic motives, or to lavish his effort upon mere artisanship; whatever school of literature tries to do it is doomed to feebleness and narrowness, to exclusion from the great passions and the higher interests of mankind.

This tendency to measure literature by a purely unmoral standard is, however, so persistent that it may be well to notice, in passing, the three facts that explain it and give it plausibility. In the first place, it arises from a disposition to transfer to literature the principles and the rules of judgment that apply to other arts. Music, for instance, — as already remarked, — can hardly be said to have any distinct moral quality. Its emotions are more or less keen in degree, and very various in kind; but they have no such definite relation to conduct as gives them strictly moral quality. Painting and sculpture, likewise, have it for a large part of their function to gratify the love of form and color; it would be too much to say that they have no moral quality, but the satisfaction of purely æsthetic desire is properly made more prominent in them than in literature.

Secondly, it may be conceded that the advocates of "Art for Art's sake" are right in their claim that the higher forms of literature do not spring primarily from moral intention. The poet does not write from a didactic motive; if he should, he would pass into the preacher, and his song turn out a sermon. They are right, too, in asserting that

definite moral quality is not *essential* to literature. There may be poetry, for example, and exquisite poetry, of which you can hardly predicate any moral quality. They are wrong only when they claim that it is by such non-moral values exclusively that literature must be measured.

Thirdly, it may be admitted to be very seldom, in literature at least, that any emotion is entirely without moral quality. We speak of the emotion arising from the sight, or the imaginative representation, of material beauty, as purely æsthetic; but even this emotion almost always has some moral suggestiveness. Whatever is beautiful to the senses, as we have seen in a previous chapter, hints some corresponding moral quality. Sensible beauty is therefore constantly used in art as a means to awaken more distinctively moral feeling, and to deepen that feeling whenever it is excited. And thus it results that the poetry which is most rich in moral quality, most powerful in its appeal to our moral sensitiveness, is never bare and bald, but abounds in varied and beautiful imagery. So in our memory beautiful sights and sounds subtly associate themselves with our deepest and most tender experience, and in the recollections of our reading we recall along with the love, the grief, the passion, that has thrilled us the sensuous charms in which it seemed embodied.

> "How near to good is what is fair!"

says one of the wisest of our elder poets.

But while we admit that moral quality is not an essential of literature, and that, on the other hand, almost all healthy emotion has some moral affinities, we must still insist that those emotions are highest in rank which are most distinctively moral, and that, consequently, the highest kind of literature can never be measured by purely non-moral standards.

Literary principles must, of course, be discussed in this book from the standpoint of the critic, not of the moralist. The critic cannot indeed ignore moral quality, but he regards it only with reference to its literary value. He asks simply, How shall the writer produce the highest effects? But it may not be improper, in closing this chapter, even at the risk of departing somewhat from the field of criticism, to consider briefly the relations of literature to practical morality.

The demand of morality is very simple. It demands that neither the writer nor any one else should write or do anything which shall tend to debase the affections, sophisticate or deaden the conscience, enfeeble the will. And this demand of morality, if it is a demand at all, is imperative; morality is supreme in human nature, or it is *not* morality. It cannot make any compromises; anything that conflicts with it must yield. Is there, then, any conflict between the legitimate aims or means of literature and this claim of *morality*? If

the poet or novelist obeys it, will he find the power of his emotional effects cramped, or their scope limited? That assertion is sometimes made. Literature, it is said, in its widest range is nothing less than the depiction of human life; it must show the whole of human nature, the evil as well as the good, the wilder and darker passions as well as the gentler and brighter affections. Art demands full play over all the field of life. It is not trying to teach a lesson; it has no other end but to exhibit what it can see or imagine. It cannot, therefore, be restricted by any limitations of morality; morality is an entirely irrelevant matter. The dramatist, the novelist, cannot stop to ask whether what he is writing will tend to edification or not; if he should, the range of artistic possibilities would be sadly narrowed at once. We admire, it is said, many things which are not good. We admire power, whether malign, or benign; we admire Napoleon, Iago, Satan. Similarly we admire strong, overmastering passion, though we cannot approve it. We admire Cleopatra — he must be either more or less than man who would not; we admire Lady Macbeth. To this admiration, it is urged, literature must be allowed to appeal, even though by so doing it may often transgress the bounds of morality. It does not know, it does not care, what shall be the moral influence of its depiction; it must give us human character and action — any of it, the whole of it.

That character and action it must depict *truly;* but it can admit no other obligation.

To all this we answer, first, and most obviously, that literature depicts human life and character with some end in view; not merely for the sake of depicting them. And the end, in the case of the forms of literature especially concerned in this discussion — poetry and fiction — is to awaken emotion. But if the depiction of any phases of human life arouse only unpleasant, repulsive, or degrading emotions, then such depiction is forbidden by the purpose of literature as well as by the laws of morality. Such a rule would put under ban a considerable body of modern fiction.

But it may be readily admitted that many books present the qualifications of literature in a high degree, exhibiting beauty and power and truth, showing, moreover, it may be, remarkable technical skill in handling, while yet their moral influence is not altogether good. They present vice, perhaps, in such way as to be seductive — that is, to blind or sophisticate the conscience or to weaken the will; or they diminish respect for some of those laws of right living upon which the moral health of society depends. The question is, Is this necessary? Must it be granted to be impossible in any case, to attain the highest literary effect without disregard of moral laws? This question may be confidently answered in the negative. Such immoral influence is never really a part of literary

value, nor the price of it. The books are great not because of their moral deficiencies, but in spite of them. In some of the work of Byron, the *Don Juan*, for instance, or in the poetry of De Musset, there is great brilliancy of imagination, unusual sensitiveness to some forms of beauty—wonderful strength in Byron, wonderful subtlety and grace in De Musset; but these excellences are not heightened by the license with which both poets are chargeable. There is no reason why our judgment upon such work should not be discriminating, recognizing at once its poetic merits and its moral defects; but we need not admit that the moral defects are essential to the poetic excellences or serve in any wise to heighten them.

And if it is said that the poet or dramatist or novelist must be at liberty to depict the whole range of human character and action, we reply, Certainly he must, subject only to the limitation that he does it, as we have said, with a view to produce legitimate literary emotion. But this liberty involves no violation of practical morality. The poet's work may exhibit every kind of unrighteousness and still be moral. And more than this is true. The depiction will not have high literary value unless it *is* moral. For, notice, critics of every school insist (as we shall see in a following chapter) that one requisite of excellence in any depiction of human life is *truth*, fidelity to the laws of human nature. But the

CHAPTER FOURTH

The Imagination

In the preceding chapter we have discussed the (qualities of emotion as a measure of literary value.) But this discussion suggests a further question. (Granted that all writing to be properly called literature must awaken some emotion, and that in certain kinds of literature — such as poetry — this is the end of the writing, we ask, What are the means to that end? How shall the poet, the dramatist, the novelist, awaken our emotions?)

Not, it is evident, merely by talking of them. No amount of discussion of joy or sorrow, or anger or love, can ever make us feel those emotions. It is true, indeed, that, now and then, readers or hearers predisposed to certain emotions seem to get a sort of stimulation from mere words. Glory, honor, patriotism—the orator may sometimes arouse a certain enthusiasm simply by the utterance of such terms; but it is only a shallow enthusiasm, and already half excited. The train, so to say, is already laid in ideas, and needs only a glowing word to fire it.

Then, too, there are certain kinds of literature, even of poetry, that do not aim to excite emotion,

but rather to express it. They presuppose the feeling, and only give it becoming utterance. That, for example, is the purpose of hymns—or ought to be. A good hymn never appeals to the emotions of the reader or singer; it only puts into sincere and becoming phrase those feelings of love or reverence or aspiration already in his heart. Hence any of the means by which the poet is accustomed to excite our feeling are here almost sure to seem out of place; the first note of rhetoric will spoil any hymn. This is one reason why the range of literary effect in devotional verse is so narrow.

But, to return to our question, when the writer *does* wish to arouse emotion, how can he do it? Not by talking about the emotion, not even by feeling it himself; he must *show us the objects that excite the emotion.* It is concrete individual things that have power upon our feelings. We do not feel, because we do not see. We read in the newspaper at our morning coffee that five thousand people perished in an earthquake in Japan yesterday. "How frightful!" we said; but we never turned the corners of our mouth in any real feeling. We did not *see* the calamity. As we say often, we did not real-ize it. We have felt more pity for some fictitious person in a novel than for all these five thousand wretches swallowed alive. It is evidently this power to see and show things in the concrete, as if they were real, that holds the key to our emotions. This power we call Imagi-

nation.) It is the most essential faculty in the equipment of the poet, dramatist, novelist; it is necessary to every man of letters.)

It is difficult to give a clear definition of imagination, partly because the word often seems to be used in a vague and mysterious way, as if there were something inexplicable in the power it names, but principally because the same word, *Imagination*, is used to cover several mental processes, alike but by no means the same. Ruskin, indeed, whose discussion of the Imagination (*Modern Painters*, Part III, § 2, Of the Imaginative Faculty) is most helpful and suggestive even when it is not perfectly clear, says at the outset of that discussion, "The essence of the Imaginative Faculty *is* utterly mysterious and inexplicable, and to be recognized in its effects only." *But this would seem to be true only in the sense* that the "essence" of any of our faculties is "utterly mysterious and inexplicable." The relation of any physical process, like a nerve change, for instance, to a mental conception is absolutely inconceivable — utterly mysterious and inexplicable. But it cannot be impossible to state what we mean by imagination, to describe the faculty — as we must all others — in terms of its results When we attempt to do so, however, we shall find that there is more than one process to which we apply the common term *Imagination*

I may frame in my mind a picture of an animal

with the head of a bird and the body of a dog; that act would probably be called imagination, though if I simply called to mind the image of a bird and of a dog, that I had seen, that would be only visual memory. Or, if I formed in mind the picture of a creature with the head of a man and the body of a horse, that would be only memory, for I should be only recalling the picture of a centaur I had seen. If a sculptor frame a mental image of a figure he is to carve from a block of marble, that is imagination. If I form a picture of a landscape, introducing hills that shut in a valley, a river flowing through the valley, pastures sprinkled with cattle and bordered by trees; if I have never actually seen this landscape and if I do now seem to see it before my mind's eye, not merely catalogue its items intellectually, then this process is imagination.

In such instances the elements combined by the act of imagination are comparatively few, and are all elements of sense perception — given by the sense of sight. But all the more noteworthy forms of the imagination go much further than this. The dramatist or novelist, we say, *creates* a character, a man or woman. Doubtless there are in the character so created no elements which have not singly, or in other combinations, come within the observation of the author who "creates" the character; but this combination of them is new. There was never such a man before; the

dramatist has created him. And, moreover, the creating of the character is not an intellectual process of abstraction, synthesis, and inference. The dramatist does not select certain qualities, put them together, and then infer what would happen; that is the method of the philosopher or jurist. The dramatist sees his man, the concrete individual man that he has himself created, very much in the same way that he sees and knows his absent neighbor. He realizes the man. Now this process, of course, is imagination, and a much higher form of it than that exemplified in either of the other cases. The elements combined are more numerous and the whole formed vastly more complex. But in all of the cases the nature of the process is the same, implying the abstraction of certain parts or qualities, and a selection and combination of them into new wholes. It is to be noticed, however, — and here, I suspect, what Ruskin calls the mystery of the imagination enters, — that this process of abstraction, selection, combination, is mostly not a conscious one. The wholes, though they must doubtless be formed of elements gathered in our experience, *seem* to spring into existence spontaneously. The poet does not laboriously piece together out of his treasured experience the creatures of his imagination: they come to him. The elements of which they are made seem to unite according to some laws of spontaneous combination not entirely

under the control of the will. "Imagine," says Ruskin, speaking of poets and artists, "imagine all that any of these men had seen or heard in the whole course of their lives, laid up accurately in their memory as in vast storehouses, extending with the poets even to the slightest intonations of syllables heard in the beginnings of their lives, and with painters down to minute folds of drapery and shapes of leaves or stones; and over all this unindexed and immeasurable mass of treasure, the imagination brooding and wandering, but dream-gifted so as to summon at any moment such groups of ideas as shall exactly fit each other." This description is itself, as Ruskin indicates, a piece of imagination; but it illustrates the way in which, out of the miscellaneous and unorganized stores of experience, the shapes of poetic imagination may spontaneously arise.

When it is seen that all the elements of experience, of whatever kind, may thus be recombined into new wholes, it is evident that the possibilities of imaginative creation are infinite. The actual life of every individual may expand and multiply itself without limit in this ideal realm. In fact, the imagination does enter, to a greater or less degree, into almost all our mental activity. It is the faculty that coördinates the isolated facts of life. We are forever putting things together in our thought, in ideal shapes; continually wondering how something might have been, or how

it may yet be. In most men's minds the resulting conceptions are not vivid enough to make any permanent impression on their feelings or play an important part in their recognized inner life; but the poet or novelist knows how to make his imagined world more thrilling and vivid, even to us, than the real one.

It is in dreams that our experience seems to be recast in most vivid and original shapes But when we try, after we have waked, to recall these creations of our dreams, we usually find that they were in the last degree improbable or irrational. Yet they did not seem so while we were dreaming. For though we are often terrified and delighted in dreams, we are never really surprised. We seem to have lost, for the time, all power to compare things, or measure them by any rational standard. Our imagination is active, but our reason is asleep. Now the waking imagination sometimes gives us such dreamlike results, capricious, irrational, not conformed to known laws of nature; but then we call it Fancy. Fancy is sane imagination voluntarily working without check or guidance from reason.

In all these cases, the act of imagination seems to be a combination; but as the process is largely spontaneous, and as the wholes formed are new, this mode of imagination may be called *Creative.* We may then briefly define it thus: *The Creative Imagination spontaneously selects among the elements*

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given by experience and combines them into new wholes. If this combination be arbitrary or irrational, the faculty is called Fancy.

But there are other and somewhat different processes to which we apply the same term, *Imagination.* As I write these lines I see again that tree mentioned in a previous chapter as an example of beauty. It was bright with all the hues of autumn then; it is bare, leafless, and gaunt now, and its naked limbs sway restlessly against a gray sky. I notice the contrast, and I can express it literally—as I have. But a great poet saw the same thing once, and he put it differently—as it would never have occurred to me to put it.

"That *time of year thou mayst in me behold,*
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,—
Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

Now what is the mental process here? Not quite the same as that we have termed creative. It is rather what—borrowing a term from Ruskin[1]

[1] But with a different meaning. Ruskin uses the adjective to characterize a form of imagination more nearly like what is here called Creative. It will be seen that, though he describes three modes of imagination ("Modern Painters," Vol. II., Part III.), his analysis is quite different from that given here. That, I fear, argues presumption in me. I can only say that while Ruskin's treatment of the imagination is more suggestive than any other I know, I have never felt sure that I understood the distinction he makes between the terms *Imagination Penetrative* and *Imagination Contemplative.*

— we may call *Associative*. The sight of the tree and the thought of its change call into the mind of the poet instantly other images that we recognize as in harmony with the object seen because producing the same emotional effects. The sight of the tree so changed from what it was suggests vaguely loneliness, desertion, the transiency of all beauty; and every image that the poet's imagination associates with it heightens that effect.

> "Yellow leaves, or none, or few, do *hang*
> Upon those boughs that shake against the cold."

The very word *hang* is imaginative. The leaves are not growing on the tree, as a living part of it now, they *hang* — which implies their lifelessness. "Those boughs that shake against the cold" — here the chill of the sky, and the tremor of the branches as if conscious of that chill, are used to heighten the central emotional effect. And finally, the lonely silence of to-day is intensified by throwing into contrast with it that sound which more than anything else in nature suggests life, joy, and freedom — the united song of birds among the leafage of trees, —

> "Bare ruin'd choirs where late the sweet birds sang."

Thus wonderfully can the poet heighten the emotional impression of an object by calling into association with it other images that tend to produce the same or allied emotions. This, then, is another and very important function of the imagination.

Notice that in this case it is an emotional impulse which calls the imagination into activity. The poet first feels the emotion suggested by the tree, and that calls into his thought other images which deepen the initial emotion. The fitness and harmony of the images are insured by the fact that they all spring from the same feeling in the poet. Indeed, in this particular case, it was not the tree that suggested the original emotion to the poet, but the emotion that suggested the tree, —

"*That time of year thou mayst in me behold.*"

It is the regret at the conscious approach of age, the loss of youthful vigor and passion, — that most pathetic because most inevitable of misfortunes, — which the poet feels; and this instantly calls up such objects as seem to embody the same feeling. But whether the initial emotion be excited by some outward object, or, as is oftener the case, by some inner experience, emotion is always at the bottom of this exercise of imagination, and insures the harmony of the images associated.

When the poet associates images that do *not* spring from a common ground of emotion, but are related only by accidental or external similarities, that, again, is an exercise of fancy rather than of imagination. Sometimes, in a person of not very quick sense of beauty and of intellectual rather than emotional temperament, this exercise of fancy gives us a profusion of those emotionally inapt

similes and metaphors which the rhetorician calls "conceits." The so-called "Metaphysical Poets" at the beginning of the seventeenth century will furnish us with an abundance of examples. Thus Dr. Donne, thinking of death as the separation of the soul from the body, compares it to the firing off of a gun, the unbinding of a pack, the mending of a clock, the hatching of an egg. On the other hand, in a person of quick sense of beauty and just feeling, this exercise of fancy, though always inferior in effect on the emotions to the imagination, may be very pleasing and graceful; as when Wordsworth, in twenty lines, calls the daisy a nun, a maiden, a queen, a beggar, a star — and might have called it a score of other things as vagrant similes occurred to him in a mood of reverie.

We may, then, describe this mode of the imagination by saying that, — *The Associative Imagination associates with an object, idea, or emotion images emotionally akin. If such association be not based on emotional kinship, the process must be called Fancy.*

The last stanza of Wordsworth's poem on the daisy, just referred to, will afford an example of a third form of the imagination.

"Sweet flower! For by that name at last,
When all my reveries are past,
I call thee, and to that hold fast.
Sweet, silent creature,

That breath'st with me in sun and air
Do thou, as thou art wont, repair
My heart with gladness, and a share
Of thy meek nature."

Here the fancy has changed to imagination, but a somewhat different mode of imagination from that seen in either of the previous cases. There is now no creation of new wholes, no calling in of other images of like emotional effect; the lines render directly the real significance of the thing to our emotions. The daisy is not compared to anything else, it is not like this, that, or the other thing, that the fancy may put beside it; it *is* a "sweet silent creature"; it can share with us its "own meek nature." Now when the poet thus sees the real character of a thing, and, so to speak, describes it by its spiritual effects, that also we call imagination. So considered, the imagination is not so much, as in the previous cases, a process of creation or of association, but rather a process of *interpretation. It now seems to be primarily a form of* insight or intuition, and can be most accurately described as the perception of spiritual values.

And a moment's reflection will show us that this perception of spiritual values is all that gives significance to most of our sensational experiences, and that without it life would hardly be worth the living. You gaze upon a beautiful landscape spread before you; you look around and above you in the silence of a midsummer night; you stand by

the seashore and watch its eternal monotonous restlessness — what do you see? Nothing but certain colors. The dog that stands beside you — except for the different visual angle of his eyes and the fact that they are two feet above the ground instead of six — sees, it is probable, precisely the same things that you do; he has, at all events, the same visual mechanism. But it is not, in strictness, what you *see* that moves you, elevates you, and if you can tell it, moves and elevates others. Nor will you come any nearer to finding out what it is that moves you by analyzing what you call the object of sight into its elements. That will give you only certain amounts of rock, water, vegetation, or, if you carry your analysis further, objectively, certain amounts of chemical elements combined so and so; or, if subjectively, certain sensations in such and such an order. That kind of process will never explain the power of what you see. Quartz cannot generate quietude of soul, nor H_2O bring calm upon the mind. The object as a whole, as a concrete thing, moves you by a power not revealed by any analysis, by a power which cannot be conceived as other than a spiritual power. Now it would not be accurate to say that the mere *emotion* which such an object, a landscape, for example, can give is imagination, though susceptibility to such emotion in any high degree usually implies imagination also. Imagination enters as soon as there is any perception of the spiritual significance and

value which is the real cause of the emotion. But when the mind tries to *express* this perception, to show as well as see, then it finds at once that imagination in a more complete form is necessary. For it must now see, not in vague, half-conscious way, but clearly and definitely, those qualities of the object in which its real meaning and power reside, and must render the object by those qualities. Thus Wordsworth calls the daisy a "sweet *silent* creature." Why silent? Of course the daisy *is* silent; but so is a rose, so, for that matter, is a cabbage—vegetables generally are. But that epithet applied to the rose would be manifestly inapt. It is appropriate here because it is subtly expressive of that demure modesty which the imagination at once fixes upon as the spiritual essence of the flower. This form of imagination, then, we may call *Interpretative.* It differs from the previous form that we have called associative, simply in that instead of rendering the emotional effect of an object by images of other things emotionally akin, it renders the object by qualities or parts of it that suggest the whole in its spiritual relations. To use Wordsworth's phrase, it "sees into the life of things"; it reveals their real nature, their deepest value. It may be formally described thus: *The Interpretative imagination perceives spiritual value or significance, and renders objects by presenting those parts or qualities in which this spiritual value resides.*

It is this third form of imagination that is of special service in any attempt to express the charm of external nature. Detailed description is always a weariness in poetry—or anywhere else; principally because it does not make us see anything. We are given a great number of details one after another, but we cannot put them together and make the picture. It is hopeless to try to do that. Not even painting can give us any exact transcript of what we see when we look upon a landscape, and it is idle for literature to attempt it. In fact, we do not ourselves remember all the details of a landscape often before our eyes, in the same full, synchronous way that we see them. Different persons doubtless differ very much in the fulness as well as the vividness of their visual memory. Recent psychological study shows curious results of that kind; but any one who will form in memory a picture of any scene, however familiar, will find that his picture consists of a few vivid features and of a background dim and hazy, refusing to take definite form. But if it be thus impossible mentally to reproduce in much detail a landscape that we know very well, obviously it is quite impossible to frame one we have never seen, simply by putting together detailed items of description. And even if it were possible, the poet would not care to have us do it; because, as has been said, the emotional effect of the landscape does not, in strictness, proceed from the details we see, but from the spir-

itual or imaginative influence of the whole. The poet, therefore, will seek to interpret rather than to describe. Perceiving in what particulars the spiritual power of the scene resides, he will care only for these. He knows that the part is better than the whole. The difference between an unimaginative treatment of nature and an imaginative treatment often seems to lie principally in the fact that the one writer tries to describe all he *sees*, while the other renders in a few epithets or images what he *feels*. Wordsworth — who, though rather given to writing philosophy when he should have been writing poetry, has said some things in which philosophy and poetry are beautifully wedded — used to affirm that the mere seeing, the acute, eager vision, was sometimes a hindrance to the imagination.

> "I speak in recollection of a time
> When *the bodily eye, in every stage of life*
> *The most despotic of our senses*, gained
> Such strength in me as often held my mind
> In absolute dominion."
>
> * * * * * *
>
> "I roamed from hill to hill, from rock to rock,
> Still craving combinations of new forms,
> New pleasures, wider empire for the sight,
> Proud of her own enjoyments, and rejoiced
> *To lay the inner faculties asleep.*"

Such a verdict is doubtless specially characteristic of a brooding poet, like Wordsworth, interested in anything which could start a train of reflection in

his mind; but most men have realized what he means by the tyranny of the eye. It is matter of familiar experience that beautiful things often seem even more beautiful in memory than they did in vision, and seem at least to derive a certain added charm from the very fact that we do *not* see them before the mind's eye as we did with the bodily eye. It is not that we see them less vividly, for the greater the vividness of imagination or memory the greater our pleasure; but what may be called the incompleteness of imaginative vision does unquestionably add to its charm. We have dropped out of our picture all irrelevant or unpleasing details; our attention is concentrated upon those few features that gave us the powerful and characteristic impression, and all the rest are lost in a dim and hazy background. The whole picture is thus toned into harmony with its prevailing sentiment. It is idealized. That is what imagination does for us all in our memory of what we have seen. We can see the process beginning even during the act of vision. We know that while we are looking at anything that charms us, the imagination is idealizing it, vaguely feeling its meanings, suggesting analogies, calling up other images akin. And we do not see the object in all its details the more clearly the longer we look at it; indeed, we probably see it less fully while the vision is thus passing into feeling. The imagination is selecting those details in which the emotional

value of the picture resides, and which are to be the permanent possession of our memory.

It will be noticed that to idealize a thing is not to falsify it; it is rather to give a vivid impression of what is most true and essential in the thing. We are to remember that the ideal is never properly contrasted with the true, or even with the real, but with the actual.

Abundant examples of this mode of treating nature may be found in the work of any genuine poet; yet it may be worth while to cite several here. The first is from Matthew Arnold's poem, *Dover Beach*.

> "The sea is calm to-night,
> The tide is full, the moon lies fair
> Upon the straits;—on the French coast the light
> Gleams and is gone: the cliffs of England stand,
> Glimmering and vast, out in the tranquil bay.
> Come to the window, sweet is the night-air!
> Only, from the long line of spray
> When the sea meets the moon-blanch'd land,
> Listen! you hear the grating roar
> Of pebbles which the waves draw back, and fling,
> At their return, up the high strand,
> Begin, and cease, and then again begin,
> With tremulous cadence slow, and bring
> The eternal note of sadness in."

This, we say, is vivid description; yet no two of us, should we try to reproduce the picture the poet has made in our mind, would paint it alike. His lines bring to our imagination with thrilling reality only those details in which the emotional

power of the scene resides — the hush of the moonlight, and the long, dreary throb of the sea. Usually the more intense the emotional impression of a scene, the more sure it is to be concentrated in very few images and not dissipated in a multitude of descriptive details. Notice the startling effect of the image in this familiar passage from Coleridge's *Christabel:* —

> "They passed the hall, that echoes still,
> Pass as lightly as you will!
> The brands were flat, the brands were dying,
> In their own white ashes lying;
> But when the lady passed there came
> *A tongue of light, a fit of flame;*
> *And Christabel saw the lady's eye,*
> *And nothing else saw she thereby*
> *Save the boss of the shield of Sir Leoline tall,*
> *Which hung in a murky old niche in the wall.*
> 'O softly tread,' said Christabel,
> 'My father seldom sleepeth well.'"

But it is not merely, perhaps it is not most strikingly, in extended passages like these that this imaginative treatment of nature is illustrated In a single line, sometimes in a single epithet, the poet can flash upon our imagination a picture that shall seem filled with passionate emotion. Compare with the picture of the melancholy sea in the passage from Arnold quoted above, a still more wonderful line from another of his poems: —

> "The unplumbed, salt, estranging sea!"

One of Burns's songs ends with this image of almost painful beauty, —

> "*The wan moon is setting behind the white wave,*
> And time is setting with me, oh!"

In Browning's *Ring and the Book*, Pompilia, telling of one of the momentary pauses of safety in her terrified flight with Caponsacchi, says, —

> "We stepped into a hovel to get food —
> *All outside was lone field, moon, and such peace!*"

Such instances may show how the poet rather interprets nature than describes it. It is not what he sees, but what he feels, that he wishes to render; but he must render that by showing us some part or aspect of what he sees.

These considerations, by the way, may indicate why no great imaginative writer's works ever can be illustrated. To attempt to illustrate them is an offence; to buy illustrated editions of poetry is a stupidity. For the pictures inevitably force into prominence irrelevant details that dim or put out the poet's conception.

What the poet feels in the presence of nature will depend, of course, in great part upon his own temperament and mood. It is, indeed, true that most objects have what may be called a natural expression, a certain impression that they are intrinsically fitted to leave on all healthy minds. And perhaps that is the most satisfactory poetry of nature which seems to render this impression faith-

fully, to show us things just as they are without any coloring from the poet's mind. It is the high praise of Wordsworth that he almost always does this. Yet it is undeniable that the world is colored by our moods. The same thing has one meaning for me to-day and quite another when my temper shall have changed to-morrow. Romeo finds balm and beauty in the air of Juliet's garden under the blessed moon that silvers all the fruit-tree tops; but Mercutio only fears that he may take cold. A high reach of imagination often appears in the expression of this "pathetic fallacy," as Ruskin terms it — in letting us see nature through the eyes of the poet, or through the eyes of the men and women he has created. Take an example from the most dramatic of modern poets, Browning. The Arab physician, Karshish, has met the risen Lazarus, and the meeting has filled him with vague, undefined wonder, which he vainly tries to explain away; and everything he says while under this spell is colored by this sense of mystery.

> "I met him thus —
> I crossed a ridge of short, sharp, broken hills
> Like an old lion's cheek teeth. Out there came
> A moon made like a face, with certain spots
> Multiform, manifold, and menacing:
> Then a wind rose behind me. So we met
> In this old, sleepy town at unaware,
> This man and I."

Here is another picture, beautiful in itself, b

many times more beautiful because it subtly expresses *the fading hope, the nerveless dejection* of the speaker. It is from that most pathetic of poems, Browning's *Andrea del Sarto.*

"I often am much wearier than you think,
This evening more than usual, and it seems
As if — forgive now — should you let me sit
Here by the window with your hand in mine
And look a half-hour forth on Fiesole,
Both of one mind, as married people use,
Quietly, quietly, the evening through,
I might get up to-morrow to my work
Cheerful and fresh as ever. Let us try.
* * * * * * *
A common greyness silvers everything, —
All in a twilight, you and I alike
— You, at the point of your first pride in me
(That's gone, you know), — but I, at every point;
My youth, my hope, my art, being all toned down
To yonder sober, pleasant Fiesole.
There's the bell clinking from the chapel-top;
That length of convent-wall across the way
Holds the trees safer, huddled more inside;
The last monk leaves the garden; days decrease,
And autumn grows, autumn in everything.
Eh? the whole seems to fall into a shape
As if I saw alike my work and self
And all that I was born to be and do,
A twilight piece."

Of course the great master of this effect, as of all others that belong especially to the dramatic art, is Shakspere. All his references to nature are of this sort. Examples are too numerous for specification, but for two we may mention the

last words of Antony to Eros,[1] which we can hardly read without a choking sense of sorrowful doom; and, as a contrasted picture, sweet Perdita's flower garden[2] as she and Florizel see it, youth and love and archness blooming in every flower.

It is thus that imagination interprets the little that we may see into the vast infinite we may feel, and so transfigures the world. Our examples have been of the imaginative treatment of external nature, because it is easy to find such examples within brief compass. But human character, real or imagined, is interpreted in the same way. When the novelist forgets that, and begins to analyze laboriously his characters instead of showing them to us in their essential words and deeds, then he forgets his art, and we forget to read him.

Although for the sake of clearness it is well to distinguish these three forms of imagination, it must not be supposed that in the actual exercise of the faculty the three forms can always be clearly discriminated. On the contrary, they shade into one another insensibly, and any extended or impressive exercise of imagination is likely to show all three.

Of all our faculties, the imagination is perhaps the most universally useful in literature. All writing that is properly to be called literature needs it, and the higher the order of literature

[1] "Antony and Cleopatra," Act IV., Sc. 14.
[2] "Winter's Tale," Act IV., Sc. 4.

the greater the demand upon the imagination. In the case of the more typical and æsthetic forms, poetry and fiction, this is so obvious as to need no discussion. But a moment's reflection will show us that the imagination is no less necessary in the more sober and pedestrian varieties of literature. In history, for example. The historian needs imagination, first, to secure the *truth* of his work. He must see his men and women if he would judge them rightly. It is his task not merely to arrange and chronicle facts, but rather, from scattered memoranda, from fragmentary and often conflicting records, to recreate the men and women of the past as they were, real, living persons whose motives shall be clear to us. He must do more than that. He must set these persons in their proper environment of circumstance, and he must, further, recreate for us that complex, indefinable something we call the spirit of an age — its characteristic feelings, preferences, modes of judgment. A man unable to realize himself or convey to others the vast difference in temper between the Elizabethan age and the age of Anne would be manifestly incapable of writing a history of either, or a life of any representative man in either. It is only the imagination that can thus recreate the persons or the spirit of the past, and so put us in their presence that we may judge them fairly. To garner and arrange facts, to take voluminous testimony

and draw careful inferences from it, this is not to write history. It is only when we are made to see the past as if it were the present that we can understand it. Doubtless the imagination may mislead the historian. If he has a preconceived ideal of his subject, the imagination may subtly warp or color his facts to fit that ideal. Some brilliant historians, the late Mr Froude, for example, have been chargeable with this fault. Or, a vivid imagination may exaggerate the picturesque phases of history, its striking or dramatic moments, to the neglect of its more dull-colored but more important social and political truths; so that what should be a history turns out something more like an epic. That is unquestionably a just criticism upon Carlyle's *French Revolution*. The true historian needs to combine with imagination industry to gather his facts, and trained practical judgment to check his imagination, correct his prepossessions, and bring his facts to the test of a strictly scientific method. But the facts with which the historian has to deal are mostly moral facts, facts of life and character; it is, therefore, only when they are verified and realized by the imagination that they can be truly estimated.

And if the historian needs imagination to insure the truth of his work, he needs it still more to give that work interest and lasting literary value. Much historical writing is removed only a little way from chronicle, records, or other raw mate-

rial of history. It is this raw material only half worked up. As such, it undoubtedly has great value for the historical student; but it has slight claim to be called literature. On the other hand, the great historians whose work has recognized and permanent literary value have always known how to present their story vividly before our imagination and thus give to it the movement and charm of real life.

This need of the imagination may be easily seen in all other forms of prose composition not strictly scientific in character. The critic, for example, if he aspire to be a man of letters, must have something more than a body of sound critical principles and good judgment in their application. His work, too, must meet the ever present requirement of literature — it must touch the emotions; and to do this, the writer must have imagination. His imagination will usually show itself, first, by realizing the personality and surroundings of the author criticised, and, secondly, by a constant play of illustration, analogy, example. The first use of his imagination will insure that his criticism be sympathetic; the second, that it be illuminating. In general, on any and all subjects, what is called in this chapter the Associative Imagination is the surest guarantee of a brilliant and suggestive style. The man who always sees his principles incorporate themselves instantly in concrete facts can hardly be a dull writer. It is true, indeed, that

imagination does not always imply a corresponding power of expression: I may have an object vividly present to my own imagination without being able to show it to my neighbor. Yet it is always easier to convey a concrete image than an abstract or general conception; and the probability of effective speech is therefore increased when the mind naturally embodies its thought in imaginative forms and clothes truth in circumstance.

In this discussion we are concerned principally with the imagination as it is used in literature to excite emotion; but we may notice, in closing this chapter, that the imagination is a necessary faculty in the acquisition of all our knowledge. Our earliest knowledge, of course, is of concrete objects of sense; when we learn later, by reading or any other means, of similar objects that we have not seen, we at once frame images more or less distinct of these objects. To understand the words composing the greater part of our substantive vocabulary is to form images of the things they name, images which, though often vague or incomplete, are not incorrect. Learning thus becomes, to a considerable degree, an exercise of the imagination. The mental growth of children depends far more than is often supposed upon their power and habit of imaging words and so realizing their knowledge as they get it; and in later years most of our reading is of little value unless it is interpreted by a constant exercise of the

imagination. What is called the scientific imagination is a similar exercise of the faculty. To a mind habitually intent upon the relation of cause and effect, any given thing or state of things naturally suggests some second thing or state of things of which the first is cause or effect. This is not reasoning; the reasoning comes afterward, to prove the validity of the suggestion. The suggestion is usually an act of spontaneous imagination, a rapid vision of possibilities. The essential difference between this scientific or practical imagination and the literary imagination is that in the case of the former, the act of imagination is the result of an intellectual impulse; in the latter, it is the result of emotion. In both cases, if the faculty exercised be imagination rather than fancy, the mind is striving to get clearer vision of the thing as it *is*, of the truth of it; but in the one case the property or phase of the thing sought is that which is of interest to the intellect, and the other that which is of interest to the emotions. For let it always be remembered that one of these phases is as much true and real as the other; the beauty and the modesty of the daisy are as certainly the *truth* as its botanical structure or the way in which it feeds on nitrogen.

Since the imagination when used in literature is always associated with emotions, it follows that any high degree of imagination generally implies a corresponding development of the emotional

nature. Powerful or wide-reaching imagination is never found in connection with a cold, thin, acrid, emotional temperament. Indeed, the imagination and the emotions seem usually to be developed in closest correspondence, any weakness or irregularity in the one finding its parallel in the other. Thus, if the emotional nature be somehow flawed, tending to extravagance and sentimentality, the imagination tends to run into fancy and to lose its basis in truth. The work of Shelley and of Keats would illustrate this in various ways. On the other hand, the men of supreme imaginative power, a Shakspere or a Dante, are always men whose emotions are deep and strong, but sane and well controlled.

CHAPTER FIFTH

THE INTELLECTUAL ELEMENT IN LITERATURE

IN this chapter we have to consider the intellectual element in literature; that is, the fact, thought, or truth which must serve as the basis of all intelligent writing. In some forms of writing, which yet are to be called literature, this element, as we have seen, forms the purpose of the book, the end for which it is written. This is the case, for example, with books of history and criticism, which aim primarily at giving, not pleasure, but fact and truth. And although even here, as has been shown in a previous chapter, it is still the power to stir the emotions which gives to the book literary quality, yet we should not estimate the book primarily by that power. We measure the worth of such a book — at all events if we are not narrowly æsthetic in our judgment — primarily by the information it gives us. But just on this account, literary criticism has less to say with reference to the intellectual element in this class of books than in any other; and what it has to say is largely so obvious as hardly to need statement. The requirement upon the intellectual element in such a book is simple, — it must be copious, accu-

rate, clear. We wish that the book should tell us as *much* fact or truth as possible; that it should tell it *correctly;* and that it should tell it with such *perspicuity* and *method* as to be easily understood. But it is evident that as to the first two of these requisites, amount and accuracy, there is little room for critical discussion.) Other related subsidiary sciences may indeed be helpful here both to the author and the critic. Thus, for example, it may be quite possible to lay down some laws of historical evidence, some rules for the gathering and sifting of testimony which shall be of great value to the historian in securing the accuracy of his work, and to the critic in estimating that accuracy. But though such special rules might be of service to the literary critic, as any thorough knowledge of the field covered by the book he criticises would certainly be, yet it can hardly be the duty of literary criticism to formulate them. And the discussion of ways and means by which the third requisite, clearness, may be secured belongs in the field of Rhetoric. To lay down laws of narration and exposition, rules for the effective disposition of arguments, to suggest ways by which a complicated mass of facts may be marshalled in orderly manner, or various streams of events combined in a methodical yet flowing story — in a word, all detailed discussion of the mechanics of style seems rather the task of the rhetorician than of the literary critic who estimates the completed

product by its effects; and in so far as it belongs to Literary Criticism at all, it may more properly be considered under the head of Form, in the next chapter.

In general, we may say of books of this kind, in which the intellectual element is of first importance, that their literary rank will depend upon the ability of the writer to combine amount, accuracy, and clearness of information with emotional interest. Men vary greatly, of course, in this ability. Yet the very impulse to utter a truth implies some feeling about it: the effort to give it adequate expression may evoke at every step associated images and emotions. When a writer's truths and facts are thus warmed by his sympathies, brightened and vivified by his imagination, we call his writing brilliant, or animated, or forcible, or picturesque — all of which terms are only names for various forms of incidental power over the emotions. The writer deficient in this power to set his subject in emotional relations must inevitably forgo most of the rhetorical virtues; if he be altogether destitute of it, his work must take rank with records, chronicles, or other raw material of literature, or at best with purely scientific writing, extremely valuable perhaps as stored and methodized knowledge, but hardly literature.

When, however, we turn to pure literature, as poetry and fiction, the first purpose of which is to stir emotion, the consideration of the intellectual

element in the work criticised suggests some interesting topics of discussion. We are not to think that this intellectual element is of little value in these more emotional forms of literature. Their rank must always depend, in great part, upon the truth they contain. We have seen in a previous chapter that the first requisite of the emotion awakened by literature is that it should be based on adequate grounds. All deep and sane emotional effects arise from some profound truth. It follows that all really great books are wise. Poetry, the most purely emotional form of literature, is to be measured always very largely by the amount and quality of the thought which underlies its emotion. The greatest poets are always men of sound judgment, wide experience of life, profound knowledge of the most important things As Carlyle says, "A poet who could only sit on a chair and write verses would never write any verses worth the reading." Indeed, the deepest truths of individual human life, and the ruling thought and belief of any age, are to be read more truly in poetry than anywhere else. No philosopher has told us so much of human life as Shakspere has; no historian has recorded so well the dominant temper of the Victorian age as Tennyson and Browning and Matthew Arnold have done. We have a right to ask, then, of any work of literary art, however emotional in purpose, What does it mean? What truths does it embody and enforce? We shall find

there is no eminence in literature without something high or serious in its thought; and that, other things being equal, the value of all literature increases with the breadth and depth of the truth it contains.

It should be noticed that in literature of this kind it is not necessary for the underlying truth to be *new*. In books whose primary purpose is to inform, as history or science, that of course is necessary. We shall not read a book that aims to tell us something we knew very well before. But in books of the other class we do not demand novelty of thought. We must make a distinction here, however, which is constantly necessary in discussing the intellectual basis of literature — the distinction between *truth* and *fact*. In works designed to stir the emotions, the facts are usually furnished by the imagination, but the truths are those laws of human nature that govern our affections, passions, conduct, and determine our relations to each other. Now the facts in a work of this kind, being fictitious, must be new; but the truths are old and usually familiar. Take, for example, any play of Shakspere, any great novel, any epic or narrative poem; the story that it tells must have the charm of novelty. It is true, indeed, that if the drama or novel be historical in subject, the main outlines of the narrative may be familiar, but the details at least must be new. Yet the value of the work will depend not chiefly upon the novelty of its facts,

but upon the vividness and power with which it enforces some essential truths of human life. And these truths are sure to be familiar. It is not the object of the writer to teach them; he takes them for granted, and avails himself of their universal power over human emotion. So true is this, that it is safe to say that no very great work of literature ever can be based on truths that are novel, recondite, or known only to a limited class. If the dramatist, or novelist, or poet attempts to do this, he restricts at once the interest of his work, and gives up hope of a place among the men of universal fame. It is quite possible for a poet to be too abstruse or subtle Some of Browning's work, for example, finds its motive in truths of human conduct that are exceptional or obscure, and the poems of which this is true can evidently never be among the world's greatest works. A novelist, the other day, wrote a novel in which the action turned upon the alleged truths of hypnotism; but it will hardly prove as lasting as some of Miss Austen's stories, which contain no truths of human nature more recondite than are to be observed at five o'clock tea.

For, as Burke said, there are not many discoveries to be made in human nature. The broad truths which underlie our life are familiar enough to us all. We do not need to be taught them; we learn them very early, since they are only the application of our intuitive moral perceptions to the facts of common experience. We ask of litera-

ire, rather, that it make us *feel* these truths — alize them in imagination and so have the emoons they are fitted to produce. The universal nd undeniable truths of human nature thus form ne stuff of the greatest literature. And he is likely be the greatest writer who can make us realize ne greatest number of these truths, who can give s a sympathetic comprehension of the widest ection of human life.

These statements suggest another question. Iow far is it necessary that these truths which, s we have said, must underlie the best literature, hould be correct? We have seen that in the ind of literature now under consideration, we o not demand that the intellectual basis should e new: do we demand that it should be, in the trict sense, true? May we not have very noble oetry or fiction based on false or mistaken views f life, and none the less noble on that account?

From what has been said of the value of truth n all literature, it should seem that this question nust be answered instantly in the negative. Yet here are some critics who would give a different nswer, and there is some literature that seems t first sight to support their position. A conemporary writer, Mr. W. J. Courthope, remarks n one of his essays,[1] that in poetry the goodness r badness of the central conception depends not n its philosophical truth, but on its fitness for

[1] "The Liberal Movement in English Literature," p. 145.

the purposes of art. Thus, "though the theory of life maintained, for example, in Pope's *Essay on Man* is for the most part false, it forms a convenient backbone for the poem and serves as a support to all those brilliant aphorisms and epigrams in which Pope's genius shone with unrivalled lustre." Wordsworth's great *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality* will afford us another example. Its central conception, that the quicker feelings of youth and the unlearned intuitions are reminiscences of a former state of existence, that

> "Not in entire forgetfulness,
> And not in utter nakedness,
> But trailing clouds of glory, do we come
> From God, who is our home" —

this conception, beautiful as it may be, is, to say the best of it, of very doubtful truth. But is the poem for that reason any less august and moving? Or, again, consider, as perhaps the most crucial instance that could be found, Shelley's great poem of revolution, the *Prometheus Unbound*. The *Prometheus* paints in most glowing colors, with a sweep and grace of imagination unsurpassed and with a most genuine rapture of feeling, the bright picture of a Social Millennium which never could be realized. It is the glorious imagined realization of an utterly false ideal. The views of human nature and human society which it embodies are radically mistaken. Is it, or is it not, therefore, of any less value as poetry? —its art

impaired because of this detachment from the truths of life?

But such instances as these by no means prove, or even indicate, that the soundness of the intellectual element in literature is a matter of secondary importance. In all three of the cases cited the poetry, which certainly is in each case very eminent poetry of its kind, is eminent in spite of the element of untruth in its central conception. More than that, this element of untruth is, in each case, just so much deduction from the permanent literary value of the poem. The excellence of the *Essay on Man* depends, as Mr. Courthope sees, principally upon detached epigrams and aphorisms, which taken by themselves are true, and which really have very little relation to the central conception. As Pope never could carry through a train of argument clearly, — being unable, for the life of him, to put two premises together and draw a logical conclusion from them, — he depended for his effects not so much upon the justice and force of the general teaching of his poem as upon the brilliancy of its details. It made comparatively little difference, therefore, whether his central conception was true or false, or whether he had any clearly defined central truth at all. And yet, who does not see that Pope's poetry would have been of a much higher order if he *could* have made it the expression of some consistent and true philosophy of life; if, let us say,

he had united with his most brilliant mastery of detail Dryden's power of sustained thinking. So Wordsworth's *Ode* is, indeed, a glorious poem, because, more forcibly, perhaps, than any other poem of this century, it gives expression to those deep-lying powers and faculties of our nature which hide themselves far within the recesses of personality and will not come out to sit down in the clear light of consciousness; which baffle our analysis, but yet are, we know,

> "The fountain light of all our day,
> The master light of all our seeing."

Wordsworth's poem is entitled to its preëminence in short, because it expresses so much truth not easily expressed; but it may be questioned whether the thought which serves as its starting-point, the idea of reminiscence, adds anything to its value. We understand what Matthew Arnold meant when he confessed to finding the great *Ode* just a little declamatory. It *is* a little declamatory; and most declamatory just when its central truth is most weak. As to Shelley's poetry, that certainly lacks the sober charm of truth. We follow breathless the poet's rapt enthusiasm, we wonder at the beauty and daring of his tenuous imaginings; but we know they have no solidity and would collapse at the first touch of fact.

We need not hesitate to affirm, then, that one requisite of the greatest literature is that the intel

lectual conceptions underlying it should correspond with the truths and laws of human life. Literature is always, in the last analysis, an imaginative representation of life, as the author conceives life; it is obvious that the value of the representation must depend on the truth of the conception. Literature is not bound always to picture life as it is in its outward circumstance—of that we shall have more to say presently; but it is bound to be faithful to its inner spirit and laws. This obligation rests even upon those varieties of literature which depart most widely from the truth of outward fact. Romantic poetry, for example. Romance is the exhibition of familiar motive in unfamiliar circumstance. It is a device to bring out the bolder traits of character by the test of some unexpected incident. We all often wonder what we should do if confronted with some sudden appeal to our love, our honor, our heroism. Romantic literature is, for the most part, a picture of characters placed in such emergency and then acting and suffering as we feel they ought. But they must be genuine human characters acting in accordance with the real laws of human nature. Compare, with reference to this requirement, Scott's romantic poetry with Byron's Oriental poems, the *Lady of the Lake* or *Marmion* with *Conrad* or *Lara*. Doubtless neither poet represents the manners and customs, the outward circumstances, of any age with exact historic fidelity. There probably never

were any such conditions as those described in the *Lady of the Lake*, and the average chieftain of the Scottish Border was probably, as Macaulay says, little better than a bare-legged cattle-thief. But there are such *men* as Marmion and Douglas and Roderick Dhu and the rest of Scott's heroes; there are such virtues, and they find healthy exercise and win genuine admiration, through all ages, in very much the same way. While, on the other hand, there never were any such men as Byron's Conrads and Laras, and never could be. These lofty, self-communing pirates and cut-throats who "combine one virtue with a thousand crimes" are only the morbid imaginings of a powerful but ill-balanced nature in peevish revolt against society. In the one case, the poetry is based on wholesome, universal truths of human nature; in the other, it has really no basis in truth at all, and hence, however popular it may be during a period of social ferment, it is sure to prove hollow at last. It is a remark of Matthew Arnold that the English poets of the beginning of this century did not *know* enough; there is passion, imagination, music, in their work, but not enough broad knowledge of life. Of several of them, at all events, — Byron, Shelley, Keats, — this remark is certainly true.

This canon applies to all high art. The artist strives to see and show the truth; to represent the inmost reality of things. This is so even when his imagination travels outside the range of all

experience and the personages of its creation are extra-human or super-human. Milton, we may be sure, had no doubt of the existence of Satan and of a series of stupendous *moral relations*, events, and consequences substantially like those he has put into *Paradise Lost.* Readers of to-day who cannot share his faith must doubtless lose something of the power of his poem. As for Dante, they said of his face: "Eccovi! That man has been in hell!" If there be any exceptions to this requirement of essential truth, they must be found in some of the more purely fanciful forms of literature. Perhaps the question "Is it true?" would have little obvious relevancy if asked, for instance, of Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, or Shakspere's *Midsummer Night's Dream.* Yet even these have a certain kind of truth; they have at least the truth of consistency. Everything that Puck or Oberon does and says in the play is in harmony with the conception of his character. The conception of the character, too, is definite and intelligible, only we have nothing quite like it in our experience. Titania and Oberon, for instance, are such creatures as men and women would be if you should cut the moral sense quite out of them and then intensify wonderfully their feeling for beauty. There are no such men and women as that, exactly (though a man like Keats comes near it), but if there were, we feel sure they would act as Oberon and Titania do. They are subject to only a part

of the laws of our human nature, but they obey that part. So in the *Ancient Mariner*, the interest is that of pure romantic fancy, a combination of beauty and wonder; but the incidents that awaken these emotions are imagined and combined in such a way as to heighten each other, and their effect on the Ancient Mariner is just such, so far as we can judge, as it would have been upon us. Indeed the very illusion which it is the purpose of such a poem to produce is a proof of its truth. It is to be said, moreover, that work of this kind, though it may be exquisite, or even, as in the case of these two examples, wonderful, is never quite the highest kind of literature. We do not give highest rank to anything which is not a faithful representation of this actual human life of ours as it is or as it might be. The *Midsummer Night's Dream*, wonderful as it is, is not so great as *Hamlet.*

Does this requirement of fidelity extend to the facts of life as well as to its truths? The facts, to be sure, are invented, but must they be such facts as are attested by our common experience? Must literature be a transcript of the outward form and circumstance of life as well as of its inner spirit and truth? Or, if we hesitate to say it must be, is it better that it should be? Must it approach that as closely as possible, and aim to reproduce life in verisimilitude as far as it can?

The answer to these questions involves the whole subject of realism in literature. Realism is a word

used with a good deal of vagueness and variety of meaning, but it usually signifies, at all events, the close adherence to admitted fact. The realist holds that all the truths of human nature are best illustrated not in extreme or unusual cases, but in the normal and common experience of everyday life. His aim, therefore, is to reproduce not the exceptional but the familiar, to give us such a picture of the outward aspects of life as may be instantly verified by our observation. He protests against the romantic as abnormal, as illustrating not the laws of life, but the exceptions to those laws. The interest in the romantic he depreciates as a form of curiosity or childish wonder; natural, indeed, to a certain stage of mental development, just as it is natural for children to like fairy stories and wonder-books, but not an interest of a high order of mind. The more extreme realist often goes further. He holds, not only that fidelity to outward fact is the surest test of literary excellence, but that almost any and all facts are suitable for literary representation and may be used therefor.

The subject of realism in imaginative literature is most frequently discussed with reference to fiction, since no one would claim that poetry should be narrowly realistic. We shall, therefore, recur to it in connection with fiction in a later chapter. Here it may suffice to notice a few principles, good of all imaginative literature, that may serve to in-

on the ground that stories do not occur, that in our real life events do not weave themselves into plots, but only go on for a time and then stop; yet he must choose out his events from the mass of which experience is composed, and he must do it on some principle. A literal transcript of any man's life in all its infinite detail would be intolerable even if it were possible. "Rose sometime after daylight; floor felt cold to my feet on emerging from bed; vexatious pain under left shoulder-blade; pulled off left-hand, back, suspender-button on dressing — momentary anger, reminded me of wrath of Achilles; soap nearly gone — *mem.* to order more; repeated Wordsworth's poetry while tying on my shoes; thought of something Miss X. said last evening" — how would a day's record on that plan look in literature? And yet a faithful account of one day's experience would read very much after that fashion.

Nor will the artist, thus forced to choose among the infinite number of facts of experience, strive to reproduce any of them with exact imitative fidelity. For the object of all art is, not to imitate, but to suggest; not to reproduce the real thing, but to give the impression which the real thing makes upon the artist. This is true even of those arts often called imitative — painting, for example. Why is it — to take a trifling illustration, yet a just and apt one — that a rose made of wax or paper is not so worthy a piece of

art as a painted rose? It resembles the real rose more closely than the painted rose ever can. Indeed it may resemble the real rose so closely, its leaves so delicately shaded, so crisp and fragile, the very appearance of dew upon them, that as you saw the two beside each other a few steps away, you might think the waxen rose the real one from which the other had been copied. But if you knew it were not real, while you might think it a pretty thing enough, you would not for a moment think of comparing it as a work of art with the painting beside it. And why not? Doubtless there are other and minor reasons — the waxen rose is not permanent, it will not last so long as the painted rose, and other things being equal, permanence is an element of value in art product. Then it is much more easily made than the painted rose, it does not evince so much skill; and skillful workmanship, technique, any evidence of difficulties overcome by trained power, is always a ground of admiration. But these are not the chief reasons why we do not esteem the waxen rose; the chief reason is that it aims to deceive us, and so does not appeal to the artistic sense at all. For it is implied in the very conception of art that we should recognize its creations to be representations of reality but not the reality itself. This antithesis with nature is necessary to the definition of art. Painters never aim to trick the eye. They could easily enough

if they wished. Any ordinary scene-painter can paint you an alcove or arched recess on a flat wall so naturally that, fifty feet away, your eye will be deceived; but no master ever would do it. A certain Belgian artist named Wiertz attained wonderful facility in this kind of optical delusion, —painting a dog lying half outside the kennel door and growling so that you step back in alarm lest the brute walk out, or scantily clad women leaning from balconies to offer you a rose, with such startling solidity of appearance that you look about to make sure where you are,—but this is not great painting. Perhaps the simplest and severest test of this representative character of all art may be found in that art most purely mimetic,—the art of acting. We speak sometimes of the illusion of the stage, but there is no such thing. The actor, if his art be genuine, never aims at that. The man and the woman I see on the stage are not Romeo and Juliet; I must not think they are. If I am betrayed into thinking so, what business have I staring at their endearments? I must be convinced that this is not life, or I shall feel decidedly *de trop*, or I ought to. Nor must I be reminded that this is Mr. A. B. and Miss C. D. If it were they in their private capacity as citizens, why then the proper thing for me to do would be to call in the police. It must evidently be for me a representation of Romeo and Juliet, purely an animated *picture* of their love.

Now this rule of art, that its effect depends upon our consciousness of its representative character, is as true of literature as of the other and more imitative arts. The action, the passion, the persons depicted in literature, are thought of not as actual and personal, but as representative and universal. This is true even of those forms of literature which would seem to be the most direct expression of individual passion. We sometimes say, indeed, in commending the sincerity of lyric poetry that it is the immediate and spontaneous utterance of the poet's passionate love or grief. But it never is. It cannot be. The very fact that the poet can treat his emotion in artistic fashion, can give it measured and calculated expression, implies that it is not the first warm outpouring of his passion. Nor do we really think of it as such. The lyric that I so much admire is not for me the cry of Mr. Robert Burns or Mr. Percy Bysshe Shelley in impassioned joy or pain. If it were, I should lose all artistic sympathy in personal sympathy; I should forget the poetry in gladness or pity for the poet. Doubtless the emotion, in the case of the lyric poet, must have been genuine; but he must have lived through it and be able to look back upon it before he can himself give it artistic treatment; and I must regard it, not as a personal confidence of the poet, but as universal, as part of the general passion of humanity, before I can have an appre-

ciation of it as literature. Art, to use Hamlet's admirable figure, holds the mirror up to nature; but it is always an image that we see in the mirror and not the reality itself. The object is presented to us imaginatively, in its universal relations.

What, then, is the relation of art to fact? How closely must the image resemble the object which it reflects? Unable to render all the infinite detail of any object or phase of life, how shall the writer choose among his facts? The simple answer would seem to be that he will choose and combine with a view to convey to his reader whatever in the object he is representing has most interested and moved himself. Wishing to render the emotion which the object, the person, or experience has awakened in him, he will render it by those facts which seem to him most significant of the emotion. But the object will not appear to him in quite the same relations as it does to the next writer; different men are impressed by different traits of the same object, person, or experience. And each artist reproduces the meaning or suggestion which the object has for him, selecting only such features as tend to render that and excluding all others. Thus there is inevitably introduced into literature a subjective and idealizing quality which removes it at once from anything like exact realistic reproduction. Nor is this all. In most cases — in all literature of a high

order — in the endeavor to express the emotional power of his object, the writer carries this idealizing process somewhat further. We all know that individual objects often seem to suggest a more perfect beauty than they possess. It is the very nature of beautiful things to suggest something more and higher; there is a certain infinity in all our best emotion. We have a type of beauty vaguely in our minds, which only rarely seems to be actually realized in nature. Beyond what we see, we feel vaguely possibilities not yet known. This is not sentiment; it is a familiar fact of our nature, which any man may verify for himself before the splendors of a sunset, under the solemn arch of a midnight sky, or in the presence of the heaving expanse of sea. Great beauty always suggests infinity. Now the poet or the novelist must often strive to heighten and idealize his object so far as to give it something of this power of infinite suggestion. Great art always does this. Cordelia, Imogen, Rosalind, Viola, and in lesser degree lesser creations like Beatrix Esmond and Romola, — they are real women to our thought, their character and conduct we recognize as true to the deepest laws of human nature; yet they are disengaged from commonplace, they have a power such as real persons cannot have, of infinite suggestion and inspiration.

So long as we have this idealizing tendency, naturally reaching out to a perfection that we cannot see, it is surely legitimate for the poet and

tion, — if, in short, he will hold by the laws of human nature, he may find his facts where he will. The object of imaginative literature is to arouse emotion. Facts are of value only for that purpose. If strong and healthy emotions are excited by the spectacle of action in unusual exigency, by sympathy with the higher reaches and supreme moments of human effort, then certainly the dramatist or novelist is not to be debarred from using such circumstances. Romance has as much warrant as the most staid and realistic commonplace.

It is of course to be remembered that, as we have seen in a previous chapter, not all emotions are of the same rank; and the realist is right in his assertion that the emotion of wonder or curiosity is not of high literary value No book, therefore, which derives its interest mainly from the strangeness of its incident or the ingenuity of its plot can ever take high rank as literature. But on the other hand, we must urge that the interest which arises from verisimilitude, from the mere fidelity with which commonplace life is depicted, is also not of much value. Too often the realist, recognizing this, and unable to disclose the power and charm that underlie the commonplace externals of life, resorts to the coarse, crude, or eccentric, to phases of life doubtless common enough, but not noble or even pleasant. Modern novelists tickle our fancy with oddities of character, with

freakish psychology, with weak or vulgar characters hopelessly caught in some tragic net of fate — with everything except sane, wholesome, normal character. They forget that great literature can never be made out of such material as this; that the supreme creations of imagination are not eccentric or exceptional, but illustrate those broad laws of human nature that are good for all time. Worse yet, some writers give us haggard, repulsive, degraded pictures of life, humanity in its debased or diseased forms, painted with resolute fidelity. To do us English-speaking people justice, it must be said that we do not accomplish much of this sort of work ourselves; but every now and then we have a spasm of admiring other people who do. Ibsen, for example — it would be hard to discover anything more depressing, more likely to produce in a healthy mind a mixture of weariness and disgust, than much of his realistic work; yet it has received high praise.

One statement, sometimes made and oftener implied by extreme realists, must be emphatically denied, — that all human life, meaning thereby anything and everything that men and women do or say or think, is fit material for art. That would be true of science. Science does want to know all facts, to be able ultimately to classify and explain everything. But literature, it cannot be too often said, is not a science, but an art. It aims, either primarily or incidentally, to move the emotions;

it therefore selects and combines under the laws of beauty and truth. It does not give us everything; it would be no better than nature if it did. It is idle to say that all things which actually occur are equally adapted to its purpose. Literature, like all other art, must be ideal in that it is never a bare transcript, but rather presents such a selection and combination of facts as will suggest some emotion better than the unselected and uncombined facts of actual life can; and, on the other hand, it will be realistic in that the facts by which this emotion is suggested are a truthful expression of human nature. But the greatness of the literature will depend not on the facts, whether familiar or romantic, but upon the amount and quality of the emotion the work excites, and upon the number and importance of the truths it embodies. Its truths and its emotion may be common, in the sense that they are universal; but the truths will not be small or trivial, the emotion will not be depressing or debased.

The word *realism*, which, as already said, is used with considerable vagueness, often bears in critical discussion two quite different meanings. It is sometimes contrasted with idealism. In this sense realism denotes the tendency to depict things as they are, with special fidelity to their outward appearance and relations; while idealism strives to render their inner meaning and suggestion. At other times realism is contrasted with romanticism. Here realism denotes the tendency to take your

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facts — whatever truths and emotion are embodied in them — from common life, to keep within the limits of the familiar, and usually of the present; while romanticism takes its facts from the strange, the heroic, and usually from the past. But although realism may be contrasted with idealism, as in the first of these definitions, there is no essential contradiction between the two. Any great work of art will exhibit both. That is, it reveals truth that has power to charm, or inspire, or in some way lift us above the dead level of daily experience; while at the same time the facts of external life in which this truth is embodied are observed and rendered with fidelity. That is, doubtless, the highest art which discloses most of truth within conditions which we recognize at once as real.

The ideal element is, indeed, the more important; that we must insist upon. There may be a great poem so divorced from the outward facts of actual life as hardly to observe the dictates of realism at all; Spenser's *Faery Queen*, Shakspere's *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, are examples. But there can be no very great literature which does not reveal or suggest some truths loftier or more profound than we get sight of on the level of our ordinary life — without, in a word, some power to disclose the ideal. Why is it that — to take familiar examples — Addison Steele, Pope, Thomson, and the other early eigh

teenth-century writers are felt by most men to be of less value, not only than Shakspere and Milton, but than Carlyle, Ruskin, Tennyson, Browning? Not primarily because of any inferiority of form, but because, as we say, they have not so much for the highest part of us. Their style is generally admirable; their teaching, such as it is, is clear and positive; but their emotions are shallow; their thoughts though clear and definite are narrow and mundane; they do not touch the deepest or highest things of our nature.

But while this is true, it is also true that the realistic motive, the determination to render facts as they are, is always helpful as a guide and corrective in literature. The true artist will always work for the expression of ideals, but he will strive to express them in the same way that nature does. When he deliberately forsakes or falsifies fact, he is usually on the wrong track. He may not have the skill to render the fact faithfully, but he will usually try to. Thus often in the early stages of an art the artist is evidently possessed by his emotion, but he has not the skill to render with fidelity the outward details in which that emotion is exhibited. An illustration may be taken from the sister art of painting. No one can see the work of some of the early Christian artists of Italy without admiring its sincerity and deep devotional feeling, while seeing at the same time that the artist cared little for realistic verisimilitude, or if he did care, had n

attain it. Thus in the series of simple, almost rude, pictures of the last scenes in the life of Jesus painted by Fra Angelico in the cells of the monastery of San Marco, there is no skill of perspective, no power to paint the human figure with accuracy; sometimes, as in the picture of the smiting of the Master, there is not even any attempt to represent the details of the scene — it is enough merely to suggest the hands that smite and the mouths that spit. But the Divine patience and silence, the ineffable pity and love, the deepest spiritual meaning of those scenes, — this the artist has felt and rendered. Such art has in it the elements of highest power, though the artist has not learned as yet to reproduce the outward scene as it was. So literature begins with poetry, which is the most idealistic variety of literature. And with this earliest poetry myth and tradition are largely mingled; the early poet is intent not on his facts, but on the meaning of his facts. Bent on rendering the high points of life, he does not reproduce a full or faithful picture. But as any art grows there will be a steady increase in the power to depict fact, to show the spiritual meaning in the real thing. And when the highest stages of art are reached, idealism and realism, fidelity to highest meaning and fidelity to fact, work together in harmony. This union can be seen in the greatest painters, — Raphael, Michael Angelo, Tintoret; it can be seen in the greatest poets, — Shakspere, Goethe, Molière.

The tendency to realism is often of great service to art, also, when idealism is degenerating into conventionalism. For it often happens that the original and powerful masters, who worked from life, come to be regarded as models to be slavishly imitated. The way in which they handled their matter, the way in which they interpreted life,—these come to be taken as the only right ways. They stand between the artist and truth; and he does his own work, and measures other people's work, not by nature nor by principles drawn directly from nature, but by purely formal and conventional standards. The seventeenth-century portrait painters, it is said, used often to paint the hands of their subjects, not from the real hands of the sitter, but from the conventional notion of what a hand ought to be Similarly the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century English poets had certain formal ways of looking at the facts of life which they supposed were the only poetic ways. Nature they considered hardly interesting at all unless observed from the standpoint of polite society. It was good to suggest pretty analogies, or to decorate a graceful and edifying morality; but it was not good in itself Against a spurious idealism like this, which is afraid of nature and strives to keep at a polite distance from naked facts, realism is quite right in asserting that the highest truth and deepest emotion are to be found in human life as it *is*. Realism, in a word

(as contrasted with idealism), is always serviceable in guiding the *methods* of the artist, but not in deciding his *ends*. The essential truths of human life, the great emotions and the great principles which form the ideal ends of the artist's work, these do not change much with the process of the centuries; but the external circumstance of life, that is in constant change. And the realists are right in saying that the artist will do best to keep himself open to this change, and not tie himself up to the standards and methods of an age that is past; that he must have and use the freedom to express life as he really sees it now, not as other people have seen it, or have decided it ought to be seen. This rule must not be interpreted so narrowly as to shut a man up to the real life of to-day for his material, and thus exclude all historic or romantic themes; but it is still true that the temper in which any really original writer regards his theme will be the temper of his own time. The greatest writers do not strive to throw themselves out of their own age. Dante, Chaucer, Shakspere, Milton, Goethe, however far afield they may sometimes have gone for their subjects, are in close sympathy, each with the life of his own time.

We may then agree with the strictures of the realist upon an idealism that has passed into mere convention or tradition; it needs to wake up and see the life of to-day, and work in sympathy with

that life, no matter how it may violate tradition in doing so. But we take issue with realism when it assumes that mere representation of the outward facts of life, however faithful or vivid that representation, or mere analysis of commonplace motive and character, however true and subtle that analysis, can ever make great literature. And if we refuse to think the work of Howells, or Ibsen, or Zola equal to that of Walter Scott or Thackeray, it is not because we object to their going to contemporary life for themes or painting that life with as resolute a fidelity as they choose; but because in that life they fail to disclose the elements of real greatness or lasting inspiration And they fail largely because they work in the temper of the analyst or scientific observer rather than in the temper of the artist The imagination seems often to have little to do in their writing; they are observing and reporting facts. Some of the extreme theorists of the school, indeed, would pretend to nothing more than that. But such writing is of necessity lacking in spiritual insight and depth of characterization. The writer too often lavishes nice technical skill and acute analysis upon subjects not worth his labor. Moreover, the concentration of attention upon outward circumstance always tends to an undue emphasis upon unessential details, as of dress, manner, speech; because such details give verisimilitude and seem to make the picture of life more easily reco

nizable. Writers of this school are generally masters of the art of reproducing conversation; only they reproduce it as a phonograph might. It is real, but it is not always significant or suggestive. Worse yet is the tendency to exhibit the more sensual phases of experience, especially such as are high-colored or pronounced in effect, simply because to a sluggish imagination these phases seem more real than any other. Disregarding the deepest and most normal truths of life, the realist is tempted to dwell upon the great outward catastrophe or degradation that makes us shudder or loathe. Ibsen, Zola, and Tolstoi have certainly not always escaped this temptation.

What has been said will indicate our estimate of the claims of realism in its other sense — the sense in which it is contrasted with romanticism, and insists upon adherence to common and usually to contemporary life, in preference to the remote, the strange, or heroic. Romance finds its highest warrant in the fact that it is the natural expression of unusual forces of character. Great passions shape life into striking forms, great character handles the facts of life in unforeseen and masterly ways. It is not the strangeness that gives chief interest to real romance; it is what that strangeness reveals. We read the story of Napoleon with wonder, but with a very different kind of wonder from that excited by the *Arabian Nights*. Whenever romance serves to exhibit the resource and

power of the human spirit in some exigency, it is a legitimate motive in literature. Men will always admire it, and always ought to. It arouses and dilates; it fills us with sympathy for strenuous endeavor, with joy in the possibilities of life. On the other hand, we may get a convincing proof of the flatness of mere romantic adventure, howsoever wild, by trying to read such a poem as one of Southey's big romantic epics, say the *Thalaba* or *Curse of Kehama*. There is a prodigious amount of incident and all passing strange; but there is nothing else, and the most startling terrors only make us yawn. In general, whenever the element of strangeness is thus purely circumstantial and in no wise a test of the force of human character, it has but slight literary value. The only exceptions to this statement would be found in those occasional triumphs of pure imagination — or rather of fancy — which are of such remarkable beauty or terror as to be their own justification. Yet even these are usually short. The *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* could hardly be prolonged without losing its power. Reason may fall under the fascination of Fancy for a little, but it will not abdicate for long.

This form of realism, which is opposed to romanticism and insists upon adherence to the present and actual, is obviously in danger of falling into flatness and dull familiarity. The masters know how to avoid this danger. They can disclose

pathos, the tragedy, the large spiritual results, that are implied in the most homely and familiar life. No poem could be more strictly realistic, more homely and narrow in circumstance, for instance, than Wordsworth's *Michael*—the story of a mountain shepherd, who was forced by hard poverty to send the only son of his old age away to the city, and who lived on in stern and silent loneliness among the hills years after his boy had gone to the bad. Yet Wordsworth has told that story with such an austere sincerity, with such a high, patriarchal simplicity of manner, that it seems a type of the primal affections and the universal sorrows of our race. Of such realism as this we can never have too much. But too often the writer, unable to show the great in the familiar, has recourse to the sensational sides of common life. Insisting on adherence to the actual, and at the same time unable to command the interest of the reader by a pure or delicate art, he seeks a stimulus in the cruder facts of life, the irregular or morbid exercise of passion, the excesses of vice. It is significant that those writers who object to the romantic or remote in theme are often themselves most fond of drastic effects. M. Zola, who objects to Walter Scott as too heroic and unreal, objects to him also as flat and wanting in flavor, and shrugs his shoulders over the *Waverley Novels*, as "littérature de pensionnat."

We say, then, in summary, that literature must

be faithful to the *truth* of life, and that its value will be measured largely by the amount of such truth which it contains. But imaginative literature need not be, indeed it cannot be, rigidly faithful to the external *facts* of life, since it attempts always to give a representation, and not an exact transcript, of life. This being the case, it *may* be realistic, either in the sense of emphasizing outward appearances and relations, or in the sense of confining itself to the familiar; it *must* be idealistic in the sense that it interprets by high ideals the facts of life and renders their spiritual significance; and it *may* be romantic in that it finds its facts in the fields of the strange, the heroic, the remote. But in any case its chief interest will reside not in the outer facts or in any mere curiosity or wonder they may excite, but in the inner truth of human life, which these facts may be shown to embody.

CHAPTER SIXTH

The Formal Element in Literature

I have a thought in my mind; by means of symbols I suggest a similar thought to your mind, or as we say—less accurately—I "convey" my thought to you. This is language, spoken or written; not, thus far, literature. I have an emotion—either a thought touched with emotion, or an emotion only vaguely connected with any definite thought; by means of written symbols, I convey to you my thought and its emotion. That *is* literature. If the primary object be to convey the thought, and the emotion wherewith it is touched be a secondary consideration, serving only to make the thought apprehended more pleasantly or more completely, the writing is some form of prose literature, as history or criticism. If, on the other hand, the emotion be of first importance, and the thought seems to take place in your mind through avenues of feeling, then the writing is some form of *belles-lettres,* probably either poetry or fiction.

How shall the emotion in my mind be conveyed to yours? In real life we may sometimes convey emotion to another by transferring literally to him the object that has excited our emotion. If

I am thrilled for a moment by the beauty of a rose, I may hand the rose to you and thus presumably convey to you my feeling of its beauty. But no art can thus make use of the immediate objects of emotion; least of all can the literary art. It must have recourse to other and more indirect means. Now the sum of all the means by which the writer strives to convey his combined thought and emotion to the reader we may call Literary Form.

It is evident, as we have seen in a previous chapter, that no emotion can be excited merely by naming it, analyzing it, talking about it, or thinking of it in the abstract. We must represent the object that evokes that emotion. All means of appeal to the emotions, therefore, must involve imagination; this, in higher or lower degree, is essential to literary form. But with this common element of imagination there may be endless variety in the means used to excite emotion. Thus, if I would make you feel the beauty of the rose, I may try to do nothing else than give you a vivid picture of it, trusting to the vividness with which I can suggest to your imagination its sensuous charms of color, texture, form, fragrance. Or, I may rather try to express some of the associated ideas and emotions which the rose suggests, — the bloom of youth, the gladness of hope, the pride of beauty; or perhaps, rather, the pathos of the rose, as the symbol of the transiency of 1 bright

things. Which of these means I should choose would depend, of course, on what seemed to me the most impressive; and thus the means I used, the literary form of my work, would be indirectly an expression of my own personality.

Moreover, I should soon find certain laws of form growing out of the nature of emotion. Knowing that emotion cannot be conveyed by describing or analyzing it, I should immediately discover that the language of feeling is not usually technical or abstract, but familiar and concrete; and that all feeling is best awakened incidentally by hints and suggestions, and not by direct and avowed appeal. I should notice further that an emotion which, like that produced by the rose, is passing and transitory, not one of the deep-lying and permanent forces of life, demands a certain brevity and grace of expression, and that I must beware of any labored or protracted effort to excite it. Other and very different emotions, also, I should find there are that admit but very few words, being too deep and serious for anything but a certain reticence and austerity of phrase; while yet others are by nature voluble and expansive, and can be best expressed at length with profusion of phrase and imagery. I should discover, also, that words, beside their primary and literal meaning, have all sorts of secondary suggestive power and association subtly bound up with them; that they remind us, more or less vaguely, of vastly

more than they rigidly mean; and that their artistic use depends very largely on a nice and instant feeling of this suggestive power. Words, moreover, especially when combined, have emotional effects proceeding not from their meaning but from their sound. I should notice, therefore, that the need of combining them, whether in prose or poetry, in such a way that their music may heighten the emotion to be conveyed is always a very important and difficult part of the problem of literary expression. These examples may serve to suggest the multitude of considerations involved in the attempt to express emotion by language, and the consequent indefinite variations in literary form.

It is often interesting to notice how form changes with every changing shade of feeling. Here are four passages expressive of the emotion of pathos suggested by a rose, the pathos of fast-fading beauty. The first is from Herrick's familiar song, —

"Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a flying;
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying."

Next, with a slightly deeper note of feeling, the closing stanza of Waller's *Go, Lovely Rose*, —

"Then die, that she
The common fate of all things rare
May read in thee:
How small a part of time they share,
That are so wondrous sweet and fair."

Then with a sad but austere resignation, quaint and pious George Herbert, —

> "Sweet Rose, whose hue, angry and brave,
> Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,
> Thy root is ever in its grave,
> And thou must die."

And last, most imaginative by far, yet most pathetic, not in verse but in a sustained rhythmical prose, one of Jeremy Taylor's wonderful similes, —

"So have I seen a rose newly springing from the clefts of its hood, and at first it was fair as the morning and filled with the dew of heaven like a lamb's fleece; but when a ruder breath had forced open its virgin modesty, and dismantled its too youthful and unripe retirements, it began to put on darkness and to decline to softness and the symptoms of a sickly age; it bowed the head and broke its stalk, and at night, having lost some of its leaves and all its beauty, it sank into the portion of weeds and outworn faces. The same is the portion of every man and every woman."

In these passages it will be noticed how the same general emotion is variously modified by the personality of the different men, and how the form changes with every change in the feeling — the Epicurean gayety of the first two poets just dashed with a shade of sadness for the thought that, though to-day we eat and drink, to-morrow we die; the grave, half-averted, half-censorious look of

Herbert, facing the beauty with stern assertion of its vanity, —

"Thou must die!"

and the rich and lingering imagination of Jeremy Taylor, which calls into view image after image, delaying with fond longing and regret upon each, yet never introducing a word or turn of phrase that does not somehow deepen the feeling of quiet but profound and unchangeable sadness at the transiency of all we admire and love. Similarly, but on a broader scale, it is matter of common observation that a change in the tone of national feeling will result in an entire change in literary form. The tyrannous excellence of Pope's verse had nearly fixed the rhyming ten-syllable couplet upon English poetry as our one metrical form; but with a fundamental revolution in English feeling that form became instantly impossible. To attempt to put most of the verse of Burns or of Shelley or of Tennyson into the manner of Pope would be manifestly absurd.

These considerations will show us that form can hardly be considered without reference to the substance of writing. Expression manifestly implies something expressed; and it is impossible to separate the charm of the one from the charm of the other. We often say, indeed, that different men express the same thought in different ways. That may perhaps be possible when what is expressed is a purely intellectual proposition; [illegible]

means, unobserved itself, to emotional ends. No criticism, therefore, that is penetrative or illuminating can ever confine itself to matters of workmanship. All the rules of formal criticism though never so skillfully applied fail to disclose the secret or the charm of genius. Similarly, when any art reaches the stage in which it claims admiration chiefly for technical skill, then that art is declining. The history of poetry in the last century or of Italian painting in the seventeenth century would illustrate this statement. It is a suggestive remark of Walter Pater[1] that the difference between *good* art and *bad* may depend upon form, but not the difference between *great* and *small* art.

But while form and substance are thus subtly implicated, they are not the same. Form we have defined as the sum of all the means by which thought and emotion are conveyed from one mind to another. Now, obviously, the means *are* not the thought and emotion. A man's thought and feeling may be in excess of his power to convey them. If literature expressed only pure thought there might not be this disparity between mental

into language, and is not naturally conveyed by propositions. In writing, therefore, in which the intellectual element largely predominates the demands upon expression will be simpler; we shall require only that the phrase of the writer accurately report his thought. And that it usually does. Obscurity in writing, in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, comes from obscurity in thinking. So true is it that language is the natural expression of thought, and so certain that no considerable processes of thought can be carried on in the mind without language, that any man who has a clear train of thought in his own mind, even though it be a long and intricate train of thought, can usually express it clearly if he will make the requisite effort. But he cannot express his emotions. For language can only express emotion by first translating it into terms of thought. The attempt to do this must always be a kind of suggestion rather than of direct representation; and this process calls for all the resources of Form. Sometimes by rhythm, cadence, or other musical quality; sometimes by striking emphasis or arrangement; sometimes by analogies which have a subtle power upon the imagination; sometimes by a turn of phrase that thrills us and we cannot tell why—by manifold inflections and modulations, it carries into our sympathy the emotional mood of the writer. Now in their command of the resources of language by which this emotion essen-

tial to literary effect is to be produced, men differ greatly. Thus an author of really great ability may be deficient in form. It is probable that there are not many entirely mute inglorious Miltons in the world, marked susceptibility to poetic feeling being usually accompanied by some gift of utterance; yet it is unquestionable that the power of expression is not always commensurate with what is to be expressed. Obviously if it were, every man might be a man of letters, for we all have emotions that poetry could be made of, and has been made of. The very fact that makes possible the appeal of literature is that there are thousands of readers who feel — or they wouldn't read — to one writer who can express.

Perhaps, however, it may be asked, How do you know that any author's gift of utterance is not adequate to his gifts of thought and feeling? Of course we cannot know any more of the contents of an author's mind than he expresses; what reason is there, then, for saying there *is* any more? What warrant have we for saying of any man, of Browning, for example, that he is a writer of great powers but deficient in form? To this it may be answered not only that our own experience shows us it is often difficult to tell all we know and feel, but also that there are many evidences that the same difficulty frequently confronts the author. Opacity or absolute obscurity of style, it is true, usually implies muddiness or

confusion of thought in the writer; but a clear and strong thinker may write a style which we call labored, or difficult, or heavy. We get his thought, but we do not apprehend it with ease and delight. Still more frequently are we assured, in various ways, that a writer feels deeply and urgently, while yet he has not the power to make us feel so. He may assert strongly and honestly an emotion which he cannot impart; he may present actions and relations that prove his sympathetic appreciation of certain phases of life, while yet he cannot make us share that sympathy. That is the case, I think, with Browning. In short, a writer may, in many ways, evince greater feeling than he can convey; and this is to be deficient in form

If these statements be correct, it follows that perfection of form must consist in the ability to convey thought and emotion with perfect fidelity. Form is outward expression of inward state, and cannot be prized for anything except its power to express. When we talk of the beauty of language or style, we must be thinking of its meaning or fitness; for language cannot be admired, as handwriting is, for some quality entirely apart from its significance. It would seem undeniable, therefore, that language approaches perfection in any instance just in proportion as it expresses the exact meaning, in thought and emotion, of the one who uses it. It renders the mental content and the temper of the writer vividly, and it ren-

it exactly—not with broad, rough effects, but rather with delicate shadings, with flexible adaptations, with subtlety and precision. Hence the cardinal virtues of all good writing are the contrasted qualities, *energy* and *delicacy*. Energy, in order to arouse the reader's attention, and to carry into his mind with life and vividness *something*; but delicacy, in order to carry just the *right* thing, to make the outlines of thought sharp, to render with fidelity the varying and subtle shades of emotion. A style may have one of these virtues without the other. Macaulay's work, for example, has energy, but it has no delicacy. There is no precision either of judgment or sentiment. You get an idea, but you never are sure that you are getting just the right idea. And similarly, his emotional values are never nice or subtle. Everything is very good or very bad. The colors are laid on in bold, contrasting splashes. Of the opposite defect—that is, a style having delicacy but lacking energy—it is not so easy to find a familiar example, because writing that lacks energy is not likely to become popular. Perhaps no better instance could be found among recent English writers than Walter Pater. His style is precise, delicate, finely shaded; he is extremely careful and skillful to indicate those subtle gradations of feeling by which one mood passes into another; but the whole impression is faint. He does not stir us enough; we find it difficult to command

sufficient attention to appreciate all his delicate effects.

But it may be asked, Is not the style of either of these men, by the definition given above, an example of almost perfect form? That is, does it not fit the thought or emotion of the writer exactly? Is not the deficiency rather in Macaulay's mind than in his style? If he expressed no nice shades of feeling, no precise distinctions of meaning, it was because he had none to express. He wrote in broad, contrasted, rough-and-ready terms because he thought that way; he had no flexibility of mind, no delicately shaded tones of feeling. His style, it may be urged, photographs his mind precisely; and therefore, according to the definition given, ought to be accounted a perfect style.

Well, if that be so, if the style do reproduce exactly the mind of the man, then we must certainly admit that it is an excellent style; the fault is in the thought of the writer, and not in its expression. And this is doubtless true, to a great degree, in Macaulay's case. The faults to be urged against his writing are not primarily faults of style, in any exact sense of the word; they are faults of mind. Which only shows the difficulty, already mentioned, of considering style apart from substance. This, however, should be said: there are certain bad habits of thinking that tend directly to vitiate style, in the sense in which we are now

using the word. For instance, if a man be not careful to think precisely, he will not be careful to express himself precisely; his speech inevitably then soon ceases to be a precise representation of his own thought,—and that is a fault of style. Extravagance in thinking, reckless emotional estimates, a readiness to yield to prejudice, a tendency to class things rapidly and inaccurately, and then to feel admiration or aversion for them as so classed,—these are mental habits that surely produce the corresponding vices of extravagance, rapidity, carelessness of statement. So that while a man's general mode of expression may very well indicate his general habit of thought, his particular statements may be very far from representing with any nicety his own opinions or feelings. We never know exactly how much he means himself by what he says. This is, in the strictest sense, a fault of style; and this fault may, in fact, be often urged against Macaulay's writing.

Or, it may be objected again, that by this definition of form, we may have very insignificant writing with very excellent style. A man's thinking may be feeble or meagre, sadly lacking in originality and power, or a man's temper may be coarse, vulgar, brutal; while yet if he be able to render that thought or temper with exactness, his style will be perfect, though what he writes may be hardly worth reading. Well, something very like that will sometimes be the case. There are some

minor poets who seem to be able to say almost perfectly what they have to say; but they have nothing to say. Their style is well enough; they have nothing to utter. Occasionally a writer may even gain deserved eminence chiefly by the excellence of his style. Joseph Addison was regarded for nearly a century as our first master of English prose. And not unjustly. Few writers ever have been able to render themselves with greater nicety. His style is flexible, graceful, urbane; it is Mr. Addison in speech. As we read it we see the very man as he was. As far as style goes, our grandfathers were right in their praise. But Addison never added much to the stock of human thought, never stirs our feelings very deeply. We see that there is not much in the man after all — no profound or original ideas, no deep passions Or, for another example, consider Addison's contemporary, Swift. Here is a temper cynical, bitter, often almost revolting; yet here again is a most astonishing power in the man to utter himself, and so a style which, with world-wide differences from Addison's, is equally admirable. It is a naked, brawny, almost brutally frank English; but it is Jonathan Swift speaking right on. The ultimate rank of Swift's writings must be measured principally by the permanent value of his truth and the permanent power of his emotion; but his style could hardly be better. Yet, while it is to be admitted that excellence of style does not of necessity imply ex-

sponding value in subject-matter, it is always to be remembered that energetic and accurate expression does always necessitate a certain vigor and discrimination of mind. No man can be a great master of exact expression without force and exactitude in his thinking. To this extent it is true that excellence of style does imply excellence of subject-matter.

For it is to be remembered that literary expression is never strictly spontaneous or unconscious. Literature is an art; and literary form, a careful and calculated effect. Even the poet, whatever he may say, does not sing as the bird sings, pouring forth his soul —

"In profuse strains
Of unpremeditated art."

On the contrary, he is writing for a reader; he is striving not merely to utter but to *convey* thought and feeling. He must, therefore, not only think what he is saying, but he must consider how the phrase in which he says it is likely to impress his reader; he must analyze his own feeling before he utters it; he must choose among the materials of expression, selecting this word or image, rejecting that. All this is a deliberate and calculated process. Doubtless in moments of happy inspiration single thoughts may come to birth full clad in fittest phrase; but no continuous efficient writing is possible without careful, well-directed effort. No man can make literature out of his thoughts and feelings

simply by opening his mouth and uttering them without forethought or arrangement. It is true, we sometimes praise a writer for what we call the "ease" of his style; we usually have in mind, in such a case, the ease with which *we* get his meaning. But even when we do mean the apparent ease or lightness of effort with which the writer seems to attain efficient expression, this very praise implies that expression is a matter of effort and difficulty. We never admire the ease with which an easy thing is done; we reserve our praise for the ready and instant mastery of difficulties. Doubtless in such cases the ease is usually only apparent, the result of long toil and tireless practice; "Easy writing," said Fox, bluntly, "makes d—d hard reading." Yet ease is a legitimate object of admiration, though not the highest object, whenever a man, either from natural aptitude or from long training, or as is usually the case from both, does with evident facility what most men can do only with toil and slowness or cannot do at all.

Similarly we often admire what we call naturalness or spontaneity. In much of the poetry of Burns, for example, there seems to be no careful art, no poetic inversions, no sense of the burdensomeness of metre: the simple diction and structure of prose glide unaware into the most melodious verse:—

> "Ye banks and braes o' Bonnie Doon,
> How can ye bloom sae fresh and fair!

How can ye sing, ye little birds,
And I sae weary, full o' care!"

Or again, and in very different mood:—

"Some books are lies frae end to end,
And some great lies were never penn'd:
Ev'n ministers they hae been kenn'd,
In holy rapture,
A rousing whid, at times, to vend,
And nail 't wi' Scripture.

"But this that I am gaun to tell,
Which lately on a night befell,
Is just as true's the Deil's in hell
Or Dublin city:
That e'er he nearer comes oursel
's a muckle pity."

But in such cases what we admire is really not the lack of art, but the way in which art uses the homely and familiar. This, we say, is our common speech; we almost think—till we try it—that we could write so ourselves. Such utter simplicity seems, moreover, and usually is, a guarantee of truth and sincerity. Yet no virtue of style is more difficult of attainment. To produce the highest effects of beauty, or humor, or pathos with such homely parsimony of phrase; to be simple but not coarse, familiar but not vapid, austere but not meagre—this is a proof either of rare genius or of nicest art.

But although literary form must always be the

result of deliberate and purposed effort, this effort will be prompted by the single desire, on the part of the writer, to express his own thought and feeling just as they are. Sincerity is the first essential of good writing. Both the cardinal virtues of style, energy and delicacy, depend directly upon it. The energy of a man's writing will be determined mainly by the genuineness of his own feelings; its delicacy and precision by the genuineness of his desire to represent those feelings exactly as they are. For he is constantly tempted to represent them as a little different from what they really are; to make them seem what perhaps he thinks they ought to be, to exaggerate or furbish or embellish them But the conscientious literary artist is afraid of all that. He really wishes to express himself, the truth as he sees it, the impression it does actually work upon his emotions. He knows that this is the only way of securing any fresh effects of originality or power If there be no beauty or force in his thought, he knows that he cannot convey any to his readers by mere external rhetoric or fine writing. To simulate a feeling, to try to be eloquent or pathetic at second-hand, this never issues in real pathos or eloquence. The resulting literary form is sure to seem padded or hollow, and not to adapt itself naturally to the varying lines of any living thought underneath it. This rule of sincerity does not debar a man from ransacking every power of language and put'in

into requisition his utmost mastery of speech in the endeavor to attain just and adequate utterance; but his motive in every case will be to express *himself*, to transfer his own mental state, as nearly as possible intact, to the mind of the reader.

Sincerity alone is not enough, it may be admitted, to insure a good style. A man may desire to express himself justly, and yet not be able to. Nor is it to be denied that writing, lacking this principle of sincerity, may often be popular and immediately effective. Hollow rhetoric and declamation are sometimes very telling for a while. The demagogue gets his way and has his day. But the demagogue does not make literature. Sound and permanent literary excellence is impossible without artistic honesty.

Thus far we have used the word *form* in its widest sense as covering all matters of expression. But the term is sometimes employed with a narrower and quite different meaning, which implies a convenient distinction. For in criticising literary workmanship we often distinguish between *form* and *manner*, meaning now by form the conception of the work *as a whole*, its plot or plan, as distinguished from the treatment or handling; the whole as contrasted with the details of language, rhythm, melody. As a piece of expression the work is to be judged, both in its form as a whole and in its de-

tails of treatment, by the energy and the precision with which it renders the thought and emotion of its author; yet in critical discussion it is often convenient to consider form and treatment separately.

Of form in this narrower sense, the one essential virtue, which embraces all others, is *Unity*. There can hardly be any work of art without that. It is a demand that applies, with substantially the same meaning, to all varieties of literature. If the work be rigidly intellectual in character, it must lead to only one conclusion; if it be narrative or epic, it must tell but one story, and subordinate all minor currents of incident to that, if it be the expression of emotion, as the pure lyric, one emotion must be dominant, and all imagery and melody made to serve that; and even if the work be more complex, showing the action and reaction of a large group of persons upon each other in great variety of circumstance, as in the higher drama, still the attention must be centred upon one group of persons *as a group*, there must be only one main course of action, and, above all, some one tone of feeling must be dominant throughout. In writing addressed primarily to the intellect and in the simpler forms of poetry, like the lyric, the demands of unity are more easily stated and more easily met. But in the higher forms of composition, in which a great variety of interests are to be combined, and in which the emotional element is rich and complex.

he unity of the work, though it may be felt, is not
o easily defined or described. For it is a unity
of feeling, and it is consistent with an immense
ariety of persons and motives. But as there may
e just as truly a unity of impression from the
nultitudinous richness of organ or orchestral music
s from the single clear note of a flute, so we may
ust as truly get unity of impression from a rich,
ubtly complex work of art as from a simple ballad.
One characteristic of literature as distinguished
rom all other arts, is that it is able to represent the
readth and complexity of life as no other art can;
et in the most perfect examples of literary form,
owever complex the emotion and however vari-
us the action, there is always a certain unity of
motional effect. Take a great play of Shak-
pere, for example. Mechanical unity of form,
uch as the traditional laws for unity of time and
lace demand, there is none; there are sometimes
wo or three concurrent, though not coördinate,
chemes of action; there is wonderful variety of
haracter and incident; broad comic effects are
ometimes set side by side with sternest tragedy;
et there is always unity of emotional impression.
The play of *Romeo and Juliet* has already been
eferred to, in a previous chapter, as illustrating
his. How distinct the dominant emotional effect
of youth and passion! How impossible not to
eel it, whether we can explain it or not! The
anguage, the atmosphere, the time of the deter-

mining scenes,—still, heavy, trancèd midsummer night, when the earth seems instinct with passion, and heavy, thunder-laden clouds swim silently into the sky,—all is subdued and blended into that tone of passionate intensity which pervades the play. A similar unity of feeling every one must recognize in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, or *As You Like It*, or *The Tempest*, or *King Lear*. The same thing is seen in poetry of smaller compass and less variety, if it be conceived in a thoroughly artistic temper Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes* will afford an excellent example of this power to combine luxuriance of detail so as to produce unity of impression The chill and hush without contrasted with the warmth and light of "argent revelry" within, the music "yearning like a god in pain"; the dim-lighted chamber, "silken, hushed, and chaste," where the moonbeams are touched to rosier hues of passion as they fall through the rich emblazoned window upon the breast of Madeline, kneeling for prayer before she sleeps—every one of the marvellously beautiful details heightens the feeling of half-melancholy wonder and romance which the poem is intended to produce. On the other hand, a lack of this unity of emotional effect will sometimes mar an otherwise most exquisite poem. A careful criticism must pronounce Tennyson's *Princess* open to this charge. The different motives in the poem are not harmonized into any unity of total effect

The pretty extravaganza which forms its central story makes no clear impression upon us. It is too strange to admit our belief; it is not strange enough to enthrall our wonder. It ought to be either more romantic or less so. The songs which fill the pauses of the story and many of the longer passages, if taken separately, are exquisitely beautiful or pathetic; but their effect as they stand in the poem is much diminished by the setting of purely fanciful or half-playful circumstance in which they are placed and by the obvious unreality of all the action. In a word, the whole is, as Tennyson called it, a Medley. There is a great deal of most charming poetry in *The Princess*; but *The Princess* is not a great poem.

Now this power to subdue and harmonize seeming differences and even discords, to show variety of action conducing to some definite result, and variety of passion blending in some total impression, is always characteristic of the highest and most difficult examples of literary form. It implies in the writer great powers of intellect, imagination, and sympathy. He must imagine simultaneously a large group of different persons and of conflicting interests; he must grasp clearly their mutual relations, see which are dominant and how they govern the rest; realize justly the whole complex condition, and then be able to render his own sense of it with vigor and precision. Indeed, in any art, this power to harmonize diverse quali-

ties in a total unity of effect, is proof of highest mastery. The noblest achievement of the art of architecture, for example, is a great Gothic cathedral. Its general conception, though vast, is distinct; the impression of massive and solemn grandeur it makes upon the emotions is unmistakable. Yet when we scan its details we find along with the stately dignity of solid pillar and soaring arch, not only all luxuriant and fantastic beauties of carving and tracery, but ugly and grinning shapes in its gargoyles and among the leafage of its capitals, and scattered throughout all varieties of wild and apparently lawless forms; yet all subdued into reverence and hallowed into religion. And so a great play of Shakspere, or a really great novel, however varied its characters, and however diverse its incidents, always leaves upon us a distinct total impression, a real unity of feeling.

All virtues that pertain to the form or plan of a work of art are really included in this requirement of Unity. For Unity implies completeness, method, harmony. Completeness demands that the form should lack nothing and, on the other hand, shall admit nothing irrelevant or additional. The work must neither be unfinished nor burdened with needless or supplementary matter. It may comprise an immense variety of detail, like a drama, or it may work its effect by a single incident and simple emotion; but in either case

must contain just enough and not too much.[1] The nicer varieties of literary art, especially the briefer ones, such as lyric, ballad, satiric portrait, often owe much of their charm to this masterly condensation; they paint a picture in a few bold strokes, send an emotion home to the heart by a dozen lines. These kinds of work especially demand clearness and delicacy of outline; they are blurred or mutilated by additions and interpolations.

By method is meant composition, in the proper sense of that word — the putting together the parts of a work in right order and proportion. Some-

[1] Keats's beautiful *Eve of St. Agnes*, referred to on a previous page, should have ended with the first two lines of the last stanza: —

> "And they are gone; ay, ages long ago
> These lovers fled away into the storm."

The rather grisly details in the remaining lines of the stanza only becloud the fair, lovely picture with which the poem should close: —

> "That night the Baron dreamt of many a woe,
> And all his warrior guests, with shade and form
> Of witch and demon, and large coffin worm
> Were long be-nightmar'd. Angela the old
> Died palsy-twitch'd, with meagre face deform:
> The Beadsman, after thousand aves told,
> For aye unsought for, slept among his ashes cold."

Not infrequent instances of the violation of this law of completeness may be found in the poetry of Browning, who was somewhat deficient in the sense of form. To mention but a single case, the *Serenade at the Villa* would have been complete had it closed with the fifth stanza; Browning added seven more stanzas very characteristic of his feeling, but quite fatal to the artistic unity of his lyric.

times that order will be a logical order, sometimes an emotional; but order there must always be. And order, in turn, implies climax. Climax, however, does not always demand that the emotional effect should grow steadily more intense quite to the end, the work closing in a grand final crescendo. On the contrary, in most works of art of any marked power, if at all extended, the point of greatest intensity is reached sometime before the end, and the emotion gradually falls throughout the closing passages. The exhibition of a complete action, with its causes and its consequences, usually makes this necessary, since the emotional interest naturally culminates at the point of crisis in the action. Moreover, such a curve of emotion, — if the phrase may be used, — closing near the normal level of feeling, seems to be more pleasing than an abrupt termination at the point of highest emotion. Shakspere's great tragedies, for example, are always rounded to a close in some mood of resignation or acquiescence; a mood which can be prolonged in thought, and in which the stormier passions of the play are slowly hushed in reverent calm.

3 By harmony is meant something more than relevancy. Harmony excludes not only everything irrelevant but many things that may be relevant to the action or argument, but that tend to produce discords of feeling or to dull the emotional effect of the work. For this reason art may

often diverge from the facts of nature or history. Thus Shakspere violates the truth of history slightly to make Hotspur young at the time of his death, and alters or omits some important details of the historical record simply because they do not seem in harmony with the type of character he wishes to exhibit in Hotspur. On the other hand, harmony admits, and indeed invites, a great diversity of emotional effects if only they can be subdued to minister to the total impression. Harmony also implies an adaptation both of general form and of rhythmical and musical effects to the sentiment to be conveyed. Some emotions can be well conveyed in a sonnet or short lyric that would be diluted and enfeebled if spread over a poem of five pages; some emotions can be well expressed in a varied and fluent metre that could hardly be put into a formal and rigid one. A love-song in the rhyming ten syllable couplet of Pope would be as absurd as a love-letter on the typewriter. The end aimed at by all these requirements of harmony, method, completeness, is the same — unity of form.

In contrast with Form in the narrow meaning of general plan or outline, the word *Style* is often employed in a specific sense to signify detailed treatment, handling, or manner. Here again we shall find that all excellences of style, in this narrow sense, are to be measured by the stand-

ards already mentioned — energy and delicacy. Does the writer at every point so use his instrument of language as to convey his own thought and feeling forcibly and precisely? That is the test to which all style must be brought. And it may be doubted whether more detailed or specific tests than this can be given. The range of thought and emotion is so immense, and, on the other hand, language is so complex an instrument, of such infinite possibilities, that it seems hopeless to lay down detailed rules for its use. If we attempt to enunciate principles of treatment or prescribe definite methods by which a given effect may be produced, we shall presently find that some one has produced that effect by a quite different method in defiance of all our principles. If a man shall convey his thought to me clearly, and shall, moreover, make me share his feeling in its full force and with all its delicate shadings, then I ask no more of his style. I will not attempt to decide *how* he shall do that, nor insist that he do it as some one else whom I have been accustomed to call a classic has done it. No matter for that; enough that he has *done* it.

Of course there are some general rules taken for granted in the character of language — such as the laws of grammatical accuracy and a few still more general laws of rhetorical usage — which all good writers observe; but the observance of them is only a negative merit, and explains noth-

ing of literary power. It is not without importance, however, to notice that a good writer always has an acute sense of the precise meaning and value of individual words. He knows how difficult, how almost impossible, is really accurate expression, and how much depends upon delicate sensitiveness and minute care in the use of words. Merely to secure clearness, while meeting the other demands of literary expression, is, he finds, by no means easy. In point of fact, very few writers succeed in attaining perfect clearness unless both matter and form are of the simplest. The requirements of metre and rhyme, for instance, often lead even great poets into obscurity. Instances of absolute opacity of meaning arising from this cause are often to be found in the midst of very beautiful passages. One of those first five stanzas of Browning's *Serenade at the Villa*, referred to in a previous paragraph, which taken by themselves make so beautiful a lyric, runs thus:—

"Earth turned in her sleep with pain,
  Sultrily suspired for proof:
In at heaven and out again,
  Lightning!—where it broke the roof,
Bloodlike, some few drops of rain."

It is a most vivid bit of description; but what does the second line mean? It seems certain that the phrase "for proof" would never have been written if Browning had not already framed the next two lines and looked impatiently for a rhyme

to "roof." Another example of the same sort may be cited from the charming poem *De Gustibus*, which stands near this in the same volume. This is the opening stanza: —

> "Your ghost will walk, you lover of trees,
> (If our loves remain)
> In an English lane,
> By a cornfield-side a-flutter with poppies.
> Hark, those two in the hazel coppice —
> A boy and a girl, if the good fates please,
> Making love, say —
> The happier they!
> Draw yourself up from the light of the moon,
> And let them pass, as they will too soon,
> With the bean flowers' boon,
> And the blackbird's tune,
> And May, and June!"

Beautiful; with a poignant touch of the pathetic briefness of all the sweetest things, but what is "the bean flowers' boon"? Is it the fragrance of the bean flowers? or their beauty? Or are the bean flowers themselves the boon of Nature to us? It rhymes with "moon" and "soon", but what it means, no one can say. What is the meaning of the last two lines of this passage from perhaps the most beautiful and most familiar of the descriptions in Byron's *Childe Harold?*

> "Then seems a floating whisper on the hill,
> But that is fancy, for the starlight dews
> All silently their tears of love instil,
> Weeping themselves away, till they infuse
> Deep into nature's breast the spirit of her

Even Tennyson, the most careful and nicely artistic of all modern English poets, will afford us examples of difficulty, if not absolute obscurity of meaning. These lines from *The Two Voices* certainly are not very transparent, nor is their meaning rendered entirely clear by their context: —

> "— Thou wilt answer but in vain.
>
> "The doubt would rest I dare not solve.
> In the same circle we revolve.
> Assurance only breeds resolve."

All these instances and scores of similar ones that might be cited from the works of the greatest poets may illustrate the constant difficulties in the use of language — what may be called the mechanical difficulties of style.

Clearness, which is violated in the above examples, is of course always a virtue, and is implied in the energy and delicacy we insist on as requisites of good style. But hardly any other one of what are often called the qualities of style can be accounted a virtue absolutely, that is, without reference to the purpose it is to serve in a particular case. We speak, for instance, of style as terse, or elaborate, or florid, or imaginative, or graceful, or piquant, or picturesque, or melodious; but all such qualities are severally virtues only as they are appropriate to the purpose in hand, and needed to convey the writer's meaning with energy and precision. What general qualities of style *are*

appropriate to any given case will obviously depend on two things: the temper of the *writer* and the nature of his *theme;* what thought and emotion is to be conveyed and who is to convey it. Of course these two conditions are more or less connected; *what* the thought or emotion is, will depend on *whose* thought or emotion it is. But for convenience' sake we may consider the two separately.

As to the theme. If the matter of writing were always purely intellectual, style would be a comparatively simple thing Its only virtue would be precision, and its laws might be few and rigid. The language of algebra is an example of this kind of writing But literature, by our initial definition, never can be addressed merely to the intellect. And the moment we consider the emotions, the problem becomes vastly more complex. Because language, as we have already seen, is the natural *expression of thought, not of emotion, words are* the signs of ideas, not of feelings. If, therefore, we are to excite or convey feeling by language, we must attend not merely to the meaning of our words but to their arrangement, their melody, their associations, and the thousand ways by which they indirectly hint or suggest emotion. Indeed, we shall find that the mere literal meaning of a word is often but a small part of its value. For, as we have already noticed, although they have their meaning proper in ideas, words have all sorts of emotional associations bound up with them, and

these associations now become often of more importance than their meaning. It is not enough that we secure clearness; we must secure emotional harmony. And in the endeavor after this, we shall often find the associations of a word — the atmosphere it brings with it — decide instantly whether it will suit our purpose. Whole classes of words, very useful in their place, are quite unfit either for poetry or for the higher levels of prose. Words which are the smooth worn counters that serve to carry on the exchange of ordinary conversation with least use of thought; words which express the half-sincere conventions and formalities of society; words which name the large, exact but cold generalizations of the philosopher, and words which are only the hollow, resonant generalizations of the declaimer; words which are soiled by sordid usage or even vulgarized by keeping company exclusively with commerce or common-place — poetry will have none of them. A single intruder of this sort can vulgarize a whole passage. The last stanza of a solemn hymn runs thus: —

"In suffering be thy love my peace,
In weakness be thy love my power;
And when the storms of life shall cease,
Jesus in that *important* hour,
In death as life be thou my guide,
And save me, who for me hast died."

Byron, who was always liable to sudden slips into prose, makes Manfred say that it was his delight

"to plunge
Into the torrent, and to roll along
On the swift whirl of the new-breaking wave
Of river-stream, or ocean in their flow.
To follow through the night the moving moon,
The stars and *their development*; or catch
The dazzling lightnings till my eyes grew dim."

Wordsworth, who also is especially liable to these lapses, almost ruins a beautiful poem by a single mechanical word: —

"And now I see with eye serene,
The very pulse of the *machine*."

On the other hand, the master of language understands the keen emotional effect often produced by a word of altogether vague and undefined import, a word wearing a beautiful nimbus of feeling that almost obliterates the exact lines of its meaning. Notice, for example, the last word of this stanza from Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*: —

"Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!
No hungry generations tread thee down.
The voice I hear this passing night was heard
In ancient days by emperor and clown:
Perhaps the self-same song that found a path
Through the sad heart of Ruth, when, sick for home,
She stood in tears amid the alien corn:
The same that oft-times hath
Charm'd magic casements, opening on the foam
Of perilous seas, in faery lands *forlorn*."

It might be difficult to define clearly to the intelligence the meaning of "forlorn" here; yet it

has a subtle meaning for the emotions. Many an epithet may be found in poetry, especially in such luxuriant poetry as that of Keats, which, without defining itself before the understanding, seems to fill the imagination with a mist of beauty, and thrill the heart with unexplained emotion. It may be admitted that this is a perilous charm, which must generally be reserved for the poet only. Yet there are many words quite fit for the use of the prose-writer which, from their familiar association with the deepest things of human life, seem to bring into dim half-light a great complex of experience, and so have power to move a volume of feeling without conveying any sharply defined ideas. In general it may be said that whenever the writer, whether in poetry or prose, would convey not only truth but the atmosphere of feeling that envelops truth, he must studiously avoid all discordant suggestion even of sound or movement, and he must avail himself of the thousand hints, insinuations, echoes, memories, shades of half-conscious feeling, that are subtly bound up with language. First and last, style is a question of phrase; Swift's blunt definition, "Proper words in proper places," sums up all its virtues. But who shall say what is the proper word or the proper place? A thousand rules cannot tell us; and he who knows is the master of his instrument, to sound what stop upon it he will.

The more general character of style, also, as con-

cise or elaborate, imaginative or logical, must obviously be determined chiefly by the theme. It is self-evident that the more purely intellectual the composition, the more concise should its manner be, the less imaginative expansion will it bear. Writing, indeed, by our definition, is not literature at all, unless it has some power to warm and light its truth by emotion; but in all forms of literature addressed principally to the understanding, any attempt at emotional or imaginative elaboration is liable to seem merely decorative, and to detract from the intrinsic force of the truth to be conveyed. It is a principle as good in letters as in architecture that ornament should never be external and detachable, but rather structural, growing naturally out of the structure, and serving, not to conceal, but to emphasize the plan and purpose of the whole. The intellect is justly impatient of all attempts to embellish the outside of truth. In pure exposition or argument, a metaphor, an example, some happy turn of phrase or flash of imagination, may often illuminate a whole train of thought, and so not merely adorn but illustrate; but whatever cannot *justify itself by such unmistakable* aid to our apprehension were better away The most unendurable of all prose writing is that which, like some of Mr. Swinburne's, clogs and obscures exposition with inapt emotional devices, until the reader, wearied and befogged by extraneous metaphor, artificial structure, labored antithesis and alliteration, de-

spairs of finding the truth presumably hidden in such a thicket of phrase. But when the principal object of the writer is to excite the emotions, he may properly employ all methods and devices that will have that effect. The poet, the novelist, often the essayist, may delay in order to set his subject in various lights, call in about it whatever of beautiful imagery may serve to make us feel its charm and power. It is to be noticed, however, that neither the most sublime nor the most intense emotion will endure expansion or elaboration of phrase. Some conceptions are themselves more august than any images by which we could try to exalt them, and will bear statement only in the simplest words. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth"—the rhetorician may not amplify that! Similarly, intense emotion, which is always of the nature of pathos, will not permit any detail in utterance. That keenest joy and that deepest grief which both alike may move to tears, are never voluble. A heart may break in half a line. The responses of Ophelia,—

"I was the more deceived,"—

the speech of Cordelia in *Lear*, the defence of Hermione in the *Winter's Tale*, are familiar examples of the reticence of intense emotion. Such emotion, moreover, must express itself with that absolute plainness which is the note of sincerity. Overmastering passion of any kind may not take

thought to order its phrase. The profoundest emotion, therefore, often utters itself in the homeliest speech. Wordsworth's *Michael*, for example, one of the most pathetic poems in our literature, is written in a style of the most absolute simplicity, in which every word seems informed with intense but restrained emotion. But feeling that is less poignant, especially if it be in any way reflective, may well be lingering and diffuse in expression. The anticipation of joy, the brooding recollection of grief, the fond regard of affection — all such emotion as this loves to dwell upon its object; it is prolonged and heightened by calling in about that object all congenial associations and imagery. As we have seen, our sense at once of the power and the charm of a truth is often increased by the aid of the imagination. Human life is short — it is an undoubted truth, but it has little power over our ordinary moods until it is fitted by the imagination with some analogy. Saith the Scripture: "For what is your life? It is even as a vapor which vanisheth away." And the pathos of the truth may be heightened still further by carrying the image into vivid detail. Tennyson, taking this image, realizes all its imaginative circumstance; moreover, he adds to the pathos of the picture by placing the vapor above the grave of the man, thus suggesting some momentary thought of the contrast between the restless cloud in the free air above, and the dull

repose of the imprisoned clay below; and he gives to the whole that last, most poignant effect of music, by the sliding liquids of the second stanza that suggest dimness, remoteness, soft-lapsing change: —

> "He will not hear the north wind rave,
> Nor, moaning, household shelter crave,
> From winter rains that beat his grave.
>
> "High up the vapors fold and swim,
> About him broods the twilight dim,
> The place he knew forgetteth him."

Nearly all Tennyson's poetry is written in this mood of reflective feeling, which invites imaginative elaboration. Consequently he has succeeded, better than any other poet of the century, in writing a verse which is profuse, luxuriant, filled with all imaginative device, and yet does not seem forced or artificial. The *In Memoriam* is an extreme example of the way in which genuinely profound reflection, suffused with still and brooding emotion, naturally finds expression in most highly elaborated artistic form.

But of all influences upon style the most decisive is that flowing directly from the personality of the writer. Good writing is always the voice of a living man. Its subtlest charm is derived from its individuality. It always suggests, though we cannot tell how, that peculiar and inexplicable combination of qualities that compose the character of the writer. For any man of force, having by long

practice gained such mastery of the mechanics of expression as to be able to utter himself with justice, must come to have a style of his own; its verbal preferences, its habitual forms of structure, its rhythm and movement—all will be peculiar to him. His character stands written in his style as surely as in his face. Swift, or Burke, or Johnson, or Ruskin, or Carlyle, or Newman, each speaks with his own voice, as no other man. But this personal influence upon style cannot be explained or measured. Indeed, it is no small part of the charm of the best literature that this individual quality refuses analysis or classification. Every great writer is a species by himself. Not that he will strive to put himself into any trick of singularity. The feeble writer may posture and put on what he takes to be the mask of genius. But no imitation or echo, no fluency of pale phrase, will content the man who has known the pains and joys of strenuous thinking. Intent above all things to utter himself truly, and knowing how hard it is to fit the right word to every flexure of thought and, harder still, to every shade of feeling and shape of fancy, he must needs bend language to his peculiar use. He may be careless of models, and he may sometimes shock smug conventions; he will make his own style.

But while individuality is not to be classified, it may be said that there are, in general, two opposite tendencies in personal expression: on the one hand,

to clearness and precision; on the other, to largeness or profusion. The difference between the two may be seen by comparing such poetry as that of Matthew Arnold with that of Tennyson, or such prose as that of Newman with that of Jeremy Taylor. Minds of the one class insist on sharply defined ideas, on clearness of image, on temperance and precision of epithet. Their style we characterize as chaste or classic. The other class have often a greater volume of thought, but less well defined; more fervor and less temperance of feeling, more abundant and vivid imagery, more wealth of color, but less sharpness of definition. Their thought seems to move through a haze of emotion, and often through a lush growth of imagery. They tend to be ornate and profuse in manner, eager in temper; they often produce larger and deeper effects, but they lack restraint and suavity. It is a contrast not peculiar to literature, but running through all forms of art. You shall take your choice between the Greek temple and the Gothic cathedral, between the statue by Praxiteles and the painting by Titian, between the sonata by Beethoven and the opera by Wagner. The one makes upon you the impression of greater delicacy, temperance, charm; the other, the impression of greater mass, complexity, power. We are not called upon to pronounce either manner absolutely better than the other; but it would seem that, in literature at least, the classic manner is the culmination of art. Precision, in the wide

sense, must be the highest virtue of expression; and it is this precision, combined with perfect ease, that constitutes the classic manner. A similar charm is justly admired in all departments of life. In manners, for example. Perfect grace without artifice, perfect simplicity without rusticity, perfect ease without slackness, perfect repose without listlessness — how hard these are to attain in manners! They are harder yet in letters. And in manners and letters alike they are proof of that crowning refinement in which art and nature seem at one. Individual tastes may justly differ, but the ultimate verdict of approval will be given to that style in which there is no over coloring of phrase, no straining of sentiment; which knows how to be beautiful without being lavish, how to be exact without being bald; in which you never find a thicket of vague epithet; in which the word, though simple, is the one right word. Such writing, whatever be its content, is the perfection of *form*, and its effects, if not quite so imperative at first, are lasting.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

Poetry

We have now examined, if somewhat rapidly and in outline, the three elements that must enter into all literature,—emotion, thought, form. So far, however, we have been concerned only with those general principles which are true of all varieties of literature. It remains in this and the following chapter to examine somewhat more carefully two forms of literature that are of sufficient prominence to demand such special consideration,—poetry and prose fiction. This chapter shall deal, then, with poetry.

To define poetry is not easy. Part of the difficulty, doubtless, arises from the fact that the word, like many familiar terms, is used with vague and varying significance. It means one thing to one man, and quite a different thing to the next man. Yet it should seem that we ought to be able to frame or find a definition at once in harmony with popular usage, and, at the same time, approximating scientific precision. Doubtless, the characteristic uppermost in the popular mind when poetry is mentioned is its form, some variety of metre or definite rhythm. Poetry is whatever is

not prose. And the notion is sanctioned by some rhetoricians. Says Whateley,[1] "Any composition in *verse* (and none that is not) is always called, whether good or bad, a Poem, by all who have no favorite hypothesis to maintain." But a moment's reflection will convince any one that this definition, which turns entirely upon *form*, does not fit even the vague general usage of the word. The whole of Euclid might be put into iambic pentameter couplets or blank verse (doubtless very blank), and might be as mathematically accurate in its feet as in its reasoning; but would any one, even the plain man, with "no favorite hypothesis to maintain," ever mistake it for poetry? The lines beginning, —

"Thirty days hath September,"

are a very convenient mnemonic, and they are a fairly accurate bit of versification; but are they a lyric poem? It is evident that no such purely formal definition can be satisfactory. Whether any writing is, or is not, poetry must depend, in part at least, on the nature of what is written.

But when we search for a substantial definition, it is difficult to find one that shall not be either too narrow — leaving out what we feel to be essential, or else too broad — letting in almost all forms of polite literature or even art in general. There are, it is true, many things said about poetry, by

[1] "Rhetoric," Part III, ch III., § 3.

way of description or comment; but they are not definitions. Some are mere eulogy upon the power or charm of poetry; some are statements of interesting qualities of poetry, accidental rather than essential; some are analyses of the mood of the poet, the habit of thought or feeling out of which poetry naturally grows.

Our early English writers who attempted to state what they meant by poetry—and they succeeded better in making it than in defining it—usually followed Aristotle, who defines the poet as a *maker*, that is one who invents or imagines. Thus Ben Jonson and Chapman both quote Aristotle, and single out invention and metrical skill as the marks of poetry. Milton's familiar characterization of poetry lays special emphasis upon its form; poetry, he says, must be "simple, sensuous, passionate." It is a description which perhaps implies most of the qualities of poetry; but it is not a definition. Other and more modern writers, as Goethe and Landor, have been inclined to regard poetry primarily as an art, and to insist upon form, power of artistic expression, as its distinctive mark. On the other hand, many modern writers, especially many poets, have laid most stress upon the emotional or imaginative content of poetry, and its spirit rather than its form. Wordsworth is perhaps the great apostle of this view. His remarks upon poetry in the famous preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* are, indeed, not so much defini-

tions as assertions of some attribute or power of poetry hitherto overlooked or underestimated; but they all assume its emotional character and value. Thus, he says, poetry "is truth carried alive into the heart by passion"; that it is "the first and last of all knowledge"; that it is "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge." In another passage, however, Wordsworth describes the rationale of the poetic process in terms which involve a genuine definition of poetry itself: "Poetry," he says, "is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings, taking its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity," the original emotion being contemplated in recollection till it disappears, and another, more imaginative emotion takes its place. Ruskin's definition belongs to the same class, "The presentation by the imagination of noble grounds for noble emotions." The objection to this is that it will include not only poetry, but almost all art whatever.

Some writers, again, have given what may be termed a mystical definition of poetry, suggested by its power to render truths not to be perceived by the understanding alone. Thus Shelley in his beautiful, but over-subtle *Defence of Poetry* defines poetry first as "the expression of the imagination," but as it was, in his thought, the special function of the imagination to disclose supersensual truth, he finds the distinguishing mark of poetry to be its power to reveal and illuminate. Similarly,

Emerson says, "Poetry is the perpetual endeavor to express the *spirit* of things." And Browning, in his essay on Shelley, dropping out of sight altogether the element of form, as it might be expected he would, declares poetry to be "the presentment of the correspondency of the Universe to the Deity, of the natural to the spiritual, and of the actual to the ideal." Matthew Arnold's famous definition, "The criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty," is nothing more than a description half vague and half tautological; for the phrase, "a criticism of life," is certainly not very clear, and what "the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty" are, we evidently cannot know till we first know what poetry is.

Sometimes we find a kind of omnibus definition, aiming to be broad enough to include all elements ever ascribed to poetry. A good example is found in Leigh Hunt's pleasing essay, *What is Poetry?* "Poetry," he says, "is the utterance of a passion for truth, beauty, and power, embodying and illustrating its conceptions by imagination and fancy, and modulating its language on the principle of variety and uniformity." Mr. Stedman, whose work, *The Nature of Poetry*, is the most thoughtful and luminous discussion of the whole subject in recent times, gives as his initial definition a statement broad enough to include form, substance, and varied effect: "Poetry is rhythmical, imaginative lan-

guage, expressing the invention, taste, thought, passion, and insight of the human soul."

If to this multitude of definitions by the highest authorities we presume to add another, it is from a desire to reach a statement simpler than most of those quoted, and withal growing more directly out of our definition of literature already given — since poetry is certainly one species of the genus literature. Coleridge, whose critical observations are usually profound and always suggestive, remarks that "the antithesis of poetry is not prose, but science." This is true; but if our definition of literature be correct, not poetry alone, but, more broadly, all literature is in antithesis to science. We have seen that it is only by virtue of its power to move the emotions that any writing gains literary quality. In many forms of literature, as in history, this appeal to the emotions is not the primary object, but is rather secondary and incidental; while in still other forms, as oratory, this appeal to the emotions, though the immediate object, is only a means to an end. But there yet remains a kind of writing of which the first purpose is to stir the emotions, or, if the expression be preferred, to give pleasure We have here a wide range of literature, which, if it instructs, does so only indirectly; if it influences the will and determines conduct — as it doubtless does in many instances — yet exerts that influence incidentally and, as it were, unconsciously; but whose object

and purpose is to arouse pleasant emotions for their own sake. Now for this wide variety of literature we lack a generic name. We may term it the Literature of Emotion; or, as the power to touch the emotions is always the distinguishing mark of literature, we may call the writing which makes this its prime object Pure Literature. But this whole body of writing, whatever it be called, may be divided into species by its form, and the characteristic mark of one of these species is that it is written in some form of metrical language. This is poetry. If, then, we had a name for all that kind of writing which finds its purpose in the appeal to the feelings, we could readily frame a definition of poetry. Thus, if we may call such writing the Literature of Emotion, we may define poetry as *That variety of the Literature of Emotion which is written in metrical form.* Or, abandoning the strictly logical style of definition, we may say that poetry is that form of literature whose purpose is to appeal to the emotions, and which is written in metrical form. These two are the essential, defining elements of poetry; it must appeal to the emotions as an end, and it must have some sort of metrical form. Wherever you have both these elements in combination, you have poetry — and only there. If you have the first without the second, you may have prose fiction, or the brief descriptive essay, or prose that, like some of De Quincey's or some of Ruskin's, may be called poetical; but without

the other, or musical element, you cannot have poetry. While, on the other hand, as has been already said, the most perfect metrical form cannot make poetry of purely intellectual material. From this definition it is evident that, both in matter and form, poetry is the purest and highest variety of literature. That which is the distinctive mark of all literature, the power of appeal to the emotions, becomes now the end and purpose of the writing; while the demands of form are obviously more complex and exacting than in any other variety of the literary art.

It may possibly be objected that this definition is too narrow. Some kinds of poetry, it will be urged, are designed, as history and criticism are designed, to appeal rather to the intellect than to the emotions. And yet this didactic poetry is very genuine poetry, often, indeed, famous poetry —Pope's *Essay on Man*, for example. But this objection is only apparent. All verse which is really poetry, however didactic its theme, must find its first purpose in emotion, not in instruction. The *Essay on Man* is as surely designed to stir the feelings as Shelley's lyrics are. If its aim *were* to give instruction, that aim could be attained much better in prose Bolingbroke's *Essays*, whence all the philosophy of Pope's poem is derived, are a much better exposition of that philosophy than the poem is; but they have no poetic value. Of course poetry may incidentally be of

great service as a teacher of truth; nay, it must be. Since the healthy cultivation of the emotions is the most important part of education, it follows that all really great poetry, which is concerned with the capital emotions of our nature, must always be of the highest value for the inspiration and the guidance of life; it carries truths not into the understanding, but into the heart, where they can be vitalized and issue in conduct. But all this —of which something more remains to be said on a later page—is a secondary influence of poetry, not part of its essential character.

But while didactic verse may be genuine poetry, we have an instinctive feeling that it cannot be poetry of the highest rank. And this feeling finds justification in our definition. For the rank of poetry, so far as it depends on its subject, will be governed by the rules set down above—in Chapter Third—for the emotional measurement of all literature. Now it is a familiar fact of our nature that the strongest emotions are those excited by particular actions and individual persons, such as in literature it is the office of the imagination to present. The emotions growing directly out of abstract or general truths are fainter and unimpassioned. Hence any didactic or reflective poetry, dealing largely with such truths, can never be of the highest rank. It must stir a lesser volume of feeling, and a feeling less intense and concentrated than the verse which portrays individual action

and passion. No matter how nice the art, how skillful the handling; no matter if the verse, like some of Pope's, attain a fame as widespread and a familiarity as universal as any other poetry in the world, and fill the speech of mankind ever thereafter with pithy or sparkling quotation, yet men will still feel that as *poetry*, however perfect of its kind, it is not the highest kind.

Poetry, as we have defined it, is distinguished from other varieties of the literature of emotion, as, for example, from fiction, by the fact that it is in metrical form. But this metrical form is not an arbitrary mechanical difference imposed from without; it arises from an inner necessity. *For the ultimate ground of distinction between* poetry and other forms of literature would seem to be that poetry not only, like fiction, finds its object and end in an appeal to the emotions, but *is at every point the language of emotion.*[1] Now the truth seems to be that the sustained expression of emotion naturally and almost inevitably

[1] This statement coincides with Coleridge's familiar definition of a poem. "A poem is that species of composition which is opposed to works of science, by proposing for its immediate object pleasure, not truth, and from all other species (having this object in common with it) it is discriminated by proposing to itself such delight from the whole as is compatible with a distinct gratification from each component part" "Biographia Literaria," ch. xiv. In a later paragraph, Coleridge, it is true, distinguishes between a poem and poetry, but he gives no clear definition of poetry, which he seems inclined to consider subjectively as a temper of the poet, rather than objectively as a product of his art.

falls into some form of metre, at all events into some form of rhythm. Laughter and sobbing, anger or gladness, impassioned entreaty, threat or endearment,—all have a more or less well-marked rhythm; and all conscious and formulated expression of emotion, such as can find place in literature, must be in that definite or measured rhythm which we call metre. Without such measure the rhythm of strong emotion is inarticulate and unintelligent; it is not yet art. But the moment the poet attempts to give purposed utterance to his feeling, in order to convey that feeling to another, then his language tends to take on metrical form.

Proof of this may be seen in the fact that the language of intense emotion, if thrown altogether out of metre, is sure to seem inflated, bombastic, ejaculatory, or in some other way unnatural; while if the same language and sentiments are put into metrical form, we feel nothing forced or unnatural in them. Hence prose translations of poetry (though for other reasons they may sometimes be the best practicable) are likely, if at all literal, to appear stilted or grandiose; and a prose paraphrase of a poem in the same language is usually impossible without almost entire change of the diction. For the same reason, the passages of so-called prose-poetry that some English writers have attempted—as De Quincey in his *Suspiria de Profundis*—are seldom very successful. They are

to change a novel, say of Walter Scott or of George Eliot, into a poem merely by putting it into metre. It is quite possible to conceive that this might be done without any essential alteration of the incidents, the arrangement and divisions of the novel, or its general treatment; but would the result be a poem? After a moment's reflection every one would answer in the negative. A poem may be turned into a story,—Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales from Shakespeare* are examples,—but a story may not be turned into a poem simply by changing it from prose to metre. Now and then we find something like a novel in verse, as Mrs. Browning's *Aurora Leigh;* but such nondescript specimens of literary form are never of any very high value either as novels or as poetry.

What, then, are the differences between the novel and the poem which grow out of this essential characteristic of the poem that it is, at every point, the language of emotion? In the first place, the poem must be *briefer* than the novel. And this not merely because emotion is transient. This accounts for the brevity of the lyric, since the intense emotion that finds expression in the lyric is by its nature fleeting; but emotion of a different quality may be sustained, though on a lower level than that of the lyric, throughout a long poem or drama. Yet in such a case it will be found that the poem is briefer than a novel covering the same ground and concerned with the same incidents.

This is because the poem, being the language of emotion, is obliged to leave out all matters that cannot sustain emotion. If it be narrative or epic in theme, it touches only the high points of the story. Its incidents must be fewer and bolder. The poem will not permit much elaboration or intricacy of plot, because that necessitates a good deal of writing having merely a constructive or explanatory value, and such passages let down the emotional power of the language. For the same reason, the action of the personages of the poem must be intelligible without exposition or analysis; simply because anything in the nature of analysis or comment, while it may heighten the interest of the novel, cannot be expressed in the language of emotion and so would drop the poem out of the poetic key. In poetry feeling must be exhibited, not described; hence any account or analysis of feeling is usually impossible, unless it be given dramatically by the subject of the feeling himself. Similarly all description in poetry must be emotional, not topographical; and emotional description is always brief and vivid, seeing through the imagination in broad, bright glimpses, not carefully accumulating and arranging details. In all these ways, then, it will be seen that the poem must be briefer than the novel. The difference may be noticed by comparing any one of Scott's romantic poems with one of his novels.

It follows, secondly, from this essential quality

of poetry as the language of emotion that poetry must differ from all other writing in diction and structure. And this not merely on account of its metrical form: the language of poetry will differ from that of prose in quality and power as well as in strictly musical effect. This has, indeed, been denied. The reader will at once recall Wordsworth's familiar assertion, in the Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads*, "that there neither is nor can be any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." But it must be admitted that Coleridge in two admirable chapters of the *Biographia Literaria* has shown this statement to be far too sweeping. Wordsworth was protesting, in the interests of nature and simplicity, against the conventional "poetic diction" of the last century. The poets of the previous age had felt bound to preserve a certain artificial refinement of language; they did not dare to call plain things by plain names. Wordsworth was quite right in contending that, under such restrictions, poetry lost sincerity and freshness of phrase. A word is not unfit for poetic use because it is plain or homely. On the contrary, the simplest word is often most moving and hence most poetical, as Wordsworth himself has proved a thousand times. His line, —

"The stars that move along the edges of the hills,"

is better than a half acre of florid description; the strength of the hills, the sublimity of the lonely

sky, the unstaying courses of the stars — they are all in that line. Often one such homely word will intensify by contrast the effect of a passage made up of less familiar diction. Notice, for example, how this picture of reeling tempest seems to culminate in the single word *wet*: —

> "Wilt thou upon the high and giddy mast
> Seal up the ship-boy's eyes, and rock his brains
> In cradle of the rude imperious surge,
> And in the visitation of the winds,
> Who take the ruffian billows by the top,
> Curling their monstrous heads, and hanging them
> With deafening clamors in the slippery clouds,
> That with the hurly death itself awakes?
> Canst thou, O partial Sleep, give thy repose
> To the *wet sea-boy* in an hour so rude,
> And in the calmest and most stillest night
> * * * * * *
> Deny it to a King!"

But while the language of prose is not differentiated from that of poetry by homeliness or familiarity, we cannot assent to the statement of Wordsworth that there are no essential differences at all between them. The truth is that Wordsworth was not nicely sensitive to the emotional value of words. Before all things sincere, and almost morbidly fearful of anything that should seem merely decorative, he failed to appreciate in other poetry those delicate or subtle charms of phrase of which he had himself no mastery. And in this respect, as in some others, he was too prone to mistake

the limitations of his own genius for universal laws. It may be true that a style so austere as his can confine itself to words that would be equally appropriate in prose; but the converse is not true. It is not true that all words fit for a pure and dignified prose style will be found equally in place in poetry. Wordsworth himself too frequently forgets that — with deplorable results. When he is at his best he has a high, patriarchal simplicity of manner which is better than any adornment; when his inspiration leaves him, he can scatter through his verse bits of cold gritty prose that fairly make the reader shiver. Such lines as the following would seem to show clearly enough the unfortunate effect of thrusting into verse the diction of prose: —

> "Proud Gordon, maddened by the thoughts
> That through his brain *are travelling*,
> Rushed forth, and at the heart of Bruce
> He launched a deadly javelin!
> Fair Ellen saw it as it came
> And, starting up to *meet the same*,
> Did with her body cover
> The youth, her chosen lover.
>
> * * * * * *
>
> But many days and many months,
> And many years *ensuing*,
> This wretched knight did vainly seek
> The death that he was wooing.
> So, coming his last help to crave,
> Heart-broken upon Ellen's grave
> *His body he extended*,
> And there his sorrows ended."

The simple law is that poetry should admit no word which, because of its predominant intellectual content or because of its habitual associations, is unfitted to be the expression of feeling. Poetry is entirely, prose only in part, the utterance of emotion; the vocabularies of the two cannot therefore coincide throughout. Compare the dialogue in any genuinely poetical drama with the conversation in a novel. The talk of the persons in the novel is usually a selection from the language of real life. We pronounce it natural; that, we say, is the way people really talk with each other when they are at their best. But there never was any talk so good as that of Shakspere's characters. It is idealized; it is too felicitous, too full of imagination to be the actual conversation of men and women. Yet it *seems* natural, because the whole drama is pitched in a key of emotion higher than that of normal experience: it is poetry.

To specify the ways in which the language of poetry is thus differentiated from that of prose would be impossible. Language is such an infinitely complex thing, and its influence upon the feelings is wrought by such a wonderful variety of means — by felicities of arrangement, by rhythm and cadence, by suggestion and association — that we can never presume to explain the charm of poetic phrase. Precisely there is the secret of genius that no one can disclose — not even genius itself. All we can say is that the poet finds the

words which match his feelings, words which seem new and fresh and remain so forever. The poetic gift is very largely a matter of expression. We who have never been rash enough to write a verse, may have the poet's feeling, but we have not his gift of utterance. I read Wordsworth's lines, —

> "Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things
> And battles long ago."

Or Shelley's, —

> "We look before and after,
> And pine for what is not,
> Our sincerest laughter
> With some pain is fraught;
> Our sweetest songs are those that tell of saddest thought."

Or Tennyson's, —

> "Break, break, break,
> At the foot of thy crags, O sea!
> But the tender grace of a day that is dead
> Will never come back to me!"

and I say, this emotion I too have known, but I cannot tell it. It is this power of one man to say what thousands of men have felt that sets these lines apart as poetry.

And it may be doubted whether this gift can ever be acquired. It may be cultivated, it is cultivated by all who have exercised it in any high degree; but the original impulse and faculty is not to be laboriously striven after. It is inborn or it is not at all.

It is evident, from these considerations, that poetry can never be translated. Its finer and subtler essence always escapes in the process. Dependent for its individual poetic quality, in every instance, upon the inexplicable power of language, that quality is lost the moment the language is changed. The intellectual content of a poem, the outlines of its imagery, its more vague and general emotional effects—these may be transferred to another tongue. The translator may be content with these, and win the praise of what is called fidelity; or, if he be himself a poet, he may weave the thought and imagery of his author into a new poem of his own which shall run parallel with the original and have perhaps a similar charm. But in either case his work is seen to be something very different from the poem he has attempted to translate.

The fact that poetry must be the immediate language of emotion explains the popular tendency to attribute to the poet a certain inspiration which industry and learning cannot compass, and which sets his work above all other writing This tendency is doubtless due partly to the fact that the poetic gift of language is incommunicable and inexplicable, and hence seems, as it is, mysterious. But the tendency implies something more than this. It was not without significance that the Greeks named the poet a creator; that the Hebrews had the same name for poet and for prophet, and evidently identified the two conceptions, much as they are in the

Latin word *vates*. Such modern definitions of poetry as those cited above from Wordsworth and Arnold — "the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge," "the criticism of life" — are not empty phrases. They bear testimony to the enduring conviction that the poet has not only emotion and utterance, but insight; that he is, in some way, a revealer of the deepest truth. And such an opinion is justified by the facts. Great poets have always something of the seer. In their pages we read the meaning of life, and discover its real issues. Now this wisdom, this power of genuine poetry to interpret life, is the direct result of its emotional character. For life is determined by the emotions. Our motives are never found in the realm of abstract and general truth; only when such truths have been passed through the feelings can they take hold upon conduct. It follows that all really vital truths, being largely truths of emotion, are to be reached not by a purely logical process, but by an exercise of the sympathies. A certain exaltation of emotion is, therefore, almost always a condition of that knowledge of life which we expect of the great poets. Says Browning, the poet of strongest passion and deepest insight among modern singers: —

"Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
But not quite so sunk that moments,
Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing,
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing."

It is only poetry that can give adequate expression to these high points of life; it is to poetry, therefore, that we look for spiritual vision and spiritual stimulus. The best poetry is by far the best of all reading, the most profitable for real wisdom. It is not a mere rhetorical salvo to say that the poet is our wisest teacher: it is simple truth.

Proof of this may be seen in the undeniable fact that the inner history of any age, the record of its deepest currents of thought and feeling, is always best read in its poetry. What picture of the spiritual life of England from 1830 to 1870 is half so vivid or half so true as that which we may see in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, in Matthew Arnold's verse, and in Robert Browning's? And the same is true of the age of Byron, of Pope, of Spenser, of Dante. The poet is usually in the forefront of his age; often, indeed, a little in advance of it, and so anticipates the philosopher. And that because he represents the somewhat vague emotional apprehension of truth which commonly precedes clear recognition and reasoned explanation. An age is like the individual, who often feels a thing to be so long before he can reason it out. Our emotional and intuitive perceptions usually run ahead of our logic. Coming truth seems to send

its light and thrill before. The poet reproduces this anticipatory feeling, ill-defined, but poignant, which is prophetic of general acceptance and philosophic justification.

The metrical or musical form of poetry, as we have said, flows directly from its essential character as the language of emotion. Considerations of form are, therefore, more important in poetry than in any other variety of literature. Extended discussion of metrics would, however, be out of proportion to the plan of this book. It must suffice to state here briefly those principles by which the technique of the poet's art is to be understood and estimated.

Poetical metre is, of course, purely a matter of sound; it is an attempt to produce, so far as possible within the limitations of ordinary speech, the effects of music. It is true that the rules of music, being based upon exact scientific laws, are more precise and more inflexible than those of metre can be. Music is a much more definite and limited art than poetry; and it must be admitted that there is rather a close analogy than an identity between the two. Yet the analogy is so close that the fundamental principles of metrics may be best understood by comparison with those of music.[1] Both musical and metrical effects alike depend upon four kinds

[1] This substantial identity of musical and poetic form is the thesis of Sidney Lanier's "Science of English Verse," a book

of variation in sound. Sounds, whether in music or verse, may be: 1, Long or short; 2, Loud or soft; 3, High or low; 4, Different in quality in accordance with the different instruments or different parts of the same instrument by which they are produced. On these four kinds of variation are based the four essential elements of poetry: Quantity, or Time; Accent, that is, extra loudness or force of utterance; Pitch, that is, position in the musical scale; and Quality, or variation in nature of tone.

How these elements enter into music is obvious enough. The quantity is time measured by notes and bars,—so many notes or their equivalent time in rests to each bar; the accent serves to divide the measures from each other for the ear, the varying pitch of consecutive notes makes the melody, or tune; while varying effects of quality are produced by playing the same melody on different instruments, or on different stops of the same instrument if at all complex, like the organ.

But all these elements, we shall see, enter, though with less precision, into poetry as surely as into music; the one most prominent in music —pitch or melody—being least prominent in verse.

It is often asserted that English verse is based

which, though open to criticism in many of its historical and linguistic statements, gives a most suggestive exposition of the principles of metre. The analysis of the elements common to the two arts of music and poetry given in the following paragraphs follows in the main that of Lanier.

solely upon accent, and not at all upon quantity. But this is not true. There is not, indeed, in modern languages, as there was in ancient, an unvarying syllabic quantity; on the contrary, the same word may take varying lengths according to circumstances. For instance, if we indicate length of time as it is indicated in music, these lines of Tennyson would be noted something as follows:[1]—

> "Break, break, break,
> On thy cold gray stones, O sea!"



Where it will be noticed that the word *on*, for example, has only about a quarter as much time as the word *cold*. But the same word with other meaning or in other metrical position might have a great deal more time. As in the familiar line—

> "Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on!"

which might be written in quantity thus:—



But while it is true that syllables have in English no unvarying quantity, it is true, nevertheless, that quantity, or the time occupied in utterance, is the basis of our system of verse. A line or verse of poetry is divided into feet or measures, and the

[1] The example is taken from Lanier, p. 101. I have, however, ventured to change his notation slightly. See p. 253.

unit of measurement is always a unit of time. That is, the successive feet in a verse, whatever the number of syllables in each, are all alike in time. These feet are set off from each other, for the ear, by the accent; but the accent is merely a mark of division, and must presuppose some principle of division, some unit of measurement. It is often said that a foot in English verse is measured by the number of syllables between accents; but in verse that is at all flexible this number is constantly changing. If *this* were the basis of metre, then there could be no constant quantity in the verse and no real unit of measurement. For example, in the lines of Tennyson quoted above, if the reader attempts to divide the line into feet by the number of syllables between accents, he can find no uniform measure at all, because the feet are not measured by number of syllables but by time of utterance. In any good verse the intervals of *time* between successive accents will be found to be approximately the same: the number of syllables will vary from none at all — a pause the length of a measure — to four, the greatest number that can be easily pronounced without repeating the accent. Usually, indeed, the number of syllables does not change constantly, but one arrangement predominates throughout the poem. Yet in poetry as in music — though of course to a lesser degree — variety demands frequent change in the number of syllables in the

measure. A long passage in which the feet should all contain an unvarying number of syllables, the accent falling each time in the same place, would be insufferably monotonous. Exquisite mastery of metrical effects is always shown, not by slavish adherence to any fixed syllabic scheme, but by almost infinite variety of arrangement, in subjection to the underlying law of quantity. In poetry, as in music, we have rests or pauses; triplets, ♩ ♩ ♩ (3), or three syllables uttered in the time of two; syncopation, or a note slightly shortened or lengthened at the expense of a following one (♪ ♩. or ♩. ♪ instead of ♩ ♩) and manifold other variations of movement, all governed by the law of the measure. Many a lovely line, if scanned by the old rule of thumb, is an insoluble metrical puzzle; but read as our instinctive sense of rhythm dictates, it falls at once into exact and melodious measure. Try, for example, to read this most beautiful line in accordance with any syllabic scheme of feet, and it is unreadable:—

"Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon."

Read it in its context, without thought of scansion, and it naturally takes this exact and beautiful form:—

𝅗𝅥 ♪ ♪ | 𝅗𝅥. | 𝅗𝅥 ♪ ♪ | 𝅗𝅥 ♪ ♪ | 𝅗𝅥 𝄽 |

Different readers may, indeed, give a somewhat different rhythm to any passage, just as different

singers would give a different rate to a musical passage without violating the fundamental law of time. Such variations will depend upon the taste or feeling of the individual reader. Thus the above line from Shakspere might be read thus:—

The lines from Tennyson quoted above:—

"Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O sea!"

and noted:—

Mr. Lanier would read thus:—

A rendering which gives, it will be noticed, a slightly different movement to the second line. But all these different readings alike obey the law of quantity which requires the same time in all feet. The variety is in number and arrangement of syllables and pauses or rests; the unity is in time between accents. All great masters of the metrical art, Coleridge,[1] Shelley, Tennyson, Swin-

[1] Coleridge, in the introductory note to his *Christabel*, seems, oddly enough, to have supposed that he had discovered a "new principle, namely, that of counting in each line the accents, not the syllables. Though the latter may vary from seven to twelve yet in each line the accents will be found to be only four." In reality Coleridge was doing only what poets have always done. He was simply writing a verse of four feet with a [illegible] than the usual amount of syllable variety.

burne, will afford examples on almost every page of the wonderful range of effects and the subtle correspondences of movement to sentiment that can be obtained by this variation of syllable and pause within the bond of quantity. Notice in this familiar stanza from Tennyson — which, indeed, illustrates almost all metrical felicities — what delightful variation of movement is produced by varying the number of syllables between accents.

> "Sweet and low, sweet and low,
> Wind of the western sea;
> Low, low, breathe and blow,
> Wind of the western sea.
> Over the rolling waters go,
> Come from the dying moon and blow,
> Blow him again to me;
> While my little one, while my pretty one, sleeps."

Sometimes these variations in quantity serve rather to emphasize some special meaning than to enhance the beauty of a passage. This is especially the case in dramatic verse. Thus when Ophelia tells her father that Hamlet has given warrant to his love for her by "almost all the holy vows of heaven," Polonius answers derisively: —

> "Ay, springes to catch woodcocks. I do know,
> When the blood burns, how prodigal the soul
> Sends the tongue vows; these blazes, daughter,
> *   *   *   *   *   *
> You must not take for fire."

Here the one word *vows* is contemptuously pro-

longed in utterance to occupy the time of a whole measure.

As to the effect of the various forms of measure, it is difficult to give any general rule more definite than the obvious one, that the more syllables or distinct impulses of utterance crowded into one unit of time, the more marked is the sense of rapidity; the more short syllables, the quicker the movement. The trisyllabic verses, therefore, in general are lighter than the dissyllabic, and better suited to less serious or weighty matters. At the same time, they are farther removed from the unmeasured rhythm of prose, and are therefore more likely to suggest art and conscious elaboration; they do not seem spontaneous unless the feeling they express is very vivacious. The absurd effect of such metres with serious themes is occasionally seen in a hymn: —

> "How tedious and tasteless the hours
> When Jesus no longer I see.
> Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers
> Have all lost their sweetness to me."

A movement which suggests Sir Toby's resolve to "go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto."

On the other hand, crowded measures express all sorts of animation; heroic, as in Byron's, —

> "Warriors and chiefs, should the shaft or the sword
> Pierce me in leading the hosts of the Lord;"

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Here the one word *vows* is contemptuously pro-

longed in utterance to occupy the time of a whole measure.

As to the effect of the various forms of measure, it is difficult to give any general rule more definite than the obvious one, that the more syllables or distinct impulses of utterance crowded into one unit of time, the more marked is the sense of rapidity; the more short syllables, the quicker the movement. The trisyllabic verses, therefore, in general are lighter than the dissyllabic, and better suited to less serious or weighty matters. At the same time, they are farther removed from the unmeasured rhythm of prose, and are therefore more likely to suggest art and conscious elaboration; they do not seem spontaneous unless the feeling they express is very vivacious. The absurd effect of such metres with serious themes is occasionally seen in a hymn: —

> "How tedious and tasteless the hours
> When Jesus no longer I see.
> Sweet prospects, sweet birds, and sweet flowers
> Have all lost their sweetness to me."

A movement which suggests Sir Toby's resolve to "go to church in a galliard and come home in a coranto."

On the other hand, crowded measures express all sorts of animation; heroic, as in Byron's, —

> "Warriors and chiefs, should the shaft or the sword
> Pierce me in leading the hosts of the Lord;"

or graceful, as in Shelley's,—

> "That orbèd maiden, with white fire laden,
> Whom mortals call the moon,
> Glides glimmering o'er my fleece-like floor,
> By the midnight breezes strewn;"

or humorous, as in Burns's,—

> "He hums and he hankers, he frets and he cankers,
> I never can please him, do a' that I can:
> He's peevish and jealous of a' the young fellows—
> O dool on the day, I met wi' an auld man!"

It is, of course, evident that the habitual dignity of Dryden's verse, or the solemn organ-like effects of Milton's, would be quite impossible with such a metrical movement as this. And in all these cases the variation in the emotional effect of the line depends, not solely, but principally, upon quantity, that is upon the number of vocal impulses within an unvarying unit of time.

Accent, the second element of verse, is by most writers on prosody accounted the basis on which the whole system of English versification rests. But this would seem hardly an accurate statement, since the accent serves only to mark for the ear those equal intervals of time which, as we have seen, are the units of poetic measurement. It is common to say that a foot in English verse is made up of one accented syllable combined with either one or two unaccented, and to classify these feet by the relative position of the accented and unaccented syllables. Thus if we represent the

accented syllable by *a* and the unaccented by *x*, the various feet are as follows: Iambic, *xa;* Trochaic, *ax;* Dactylic, *axx;* Anapæstic, *xxa*. But this grouping is not very important. Usually, it is true, one or another of these feet will predominate throughout a poem; yet they are constantly interchanged to secure special effects. Thus in this iambic line the first foot is made a trochee to suggest a leaping start, —

"Gallop apace, ye fiery-footed steeds!"

Thousands of such changes may be gathered from Shakspere's verse or any other that is at all flexible, and with infinite variety of effect. In a word, if the verse be really living and not mechanical, its movement will be decided at every instant by its emotion, and will never, for twenty lines together, fit into any rigid syllabic scheme. Moreover, the same passage may often be considered indifferently iambic or trochaic, dactylic or anapæstic. Thus the line just quoted might be scanned as trochaic, beginning with a dactyl.

It is usually said that we have no spondaic foot in English verse, that is, no two consecutive syllables under equal accent. We do not have it regularly, but we certainly do occasionally get the effect of the spondee. In the line from the *Midsummer Night's Dream*, already twice quoted, —

"Quench'd in the chaste beams of the watery moon,"

the two words *chaste beams* are under

cent and are alike in quantity. Or notice the third line of this familiar and beautiful quatrain from Wordsworth:—

> "Will no one tell me what she sings?
> Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
> For old, unhappy, far-off things,
> And battles long ago."

Every one who is not trying to stretch this line upon the rack of some fixed syllabic scansion, would naturally read it thus:—

> "For old, unhappy, far-off things,"



when the third foot is a genuine spondee.

Of course every word in English of more than one syllable has a special accent fixed by convention upon a certain syllable. In verse this verbal accent must coincide with the metrical accent, that is, the metre must never oblige us to throw accent upon a syllable which would not be accented in prose. It is always a fault when we are tempted to do so. Besides this verbal accent, there is also the logical accent, that is, the stress naturally given to some chief words in a sentence because of their importance in meaning. This importance is indicated in part—as will be noticed in a later paragraph—by a change in pitch, but in part, also, by increased accent. And this logical accent

also must coincide with the metrical accent, no important words being placed where they cannot take metrical accent. There are therefore two degrees of accent in any verse,—one upon those syllables that have only the metrical accent, the other and stronger on those that have both the metrical and the logical. The distribution of these heavy accents usually determines the position of the *pauses* in verse, and so divides poetry into *phrases*, very much as music is divided.

Wordsworth's stanza, for example, falls into phrases thus, the words having heavy accent being italicized:—

> "Will no one *tell* me | *what* she sings? |
> *Perhaps* | the plaintive numbers flow
> For *old*, | *unhappy*, | *far-off* things, |
> And *battles* | long ago "

In the subtle adjustment of accent and pause to suit at once the meaning and the music of his verse, there is room for all the nicest art of the poet.

The third element of verse, pitch, is more prominent and relatively more important in music than in poetry. And yet hardly so. For pitch in poetry is what we call inflection, upon which the charm of poetry for the ear very largely depends. How largely, we may see at once by reading any beautiful passage of poetry in a dead monotone, preserving perfectly its movement and accent, but keeping the voice on the same note throughout.

Try it, for example, with the touching lines of Viola:—

> "She never told her love,
> But let concealment, like a worm i' the bud,
> Feed on her damask cheek: she pined in thought,
> And with a green and yellow melancholy,
> She sat like patience on a monument,
> Smiling at grief."

Read thus, the most exquisite poetry becomes intolerable.

In truth the principal difference between singing and reading seems to be that in singing the voice is carried over a greater range of notes, and the intervals between the notes struck, being wider, can be accurately indicated by a system of musical notation. In reading, on the other hand, the voice passes over only a small part of one octave, but it slides through much finer gradations of pitch than can be designated by the notes of the musical scale. There are, in fact, a practically infinite number of gradations of tone between D sharp and E flat, for instance, and many that the ear can catch and enjoy. But they cannot be notated. The poet, therefore, cannot designate how the pitch of the reader's voice should change from syllable to syllable—cannot, in a word, write the *tune* of his verse. Yet there is a tune in every passage of real poetry, though perhaps no two readers might give exactly the same one. And the beauty of verse is determined very largely by this tune, that is, by the way the meaning or feeling of the pas-

sage naturally suggests such varying inflection as shall be musical. This we call, strictly, the *melody* of verse, as distinguished from the movement, emphasis, or tone-color. Poets differ very widely in their power to produce effects of genuine melody. The master knows how so to modulate his verse as to suggest inevitably to any intelligent reader substantially the same music that sang in his own imagination. As a rule, any unusual or elaborate form of *stanza* is adopted for the purpose of producing unmistakable effects of melody. This lyric from Herrick, for example, with its broken and delaying rhythm, its soft, lingering cadences, is a delightful bit of music:—

"Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early rising sun
Has not attained his noon.
Stay, stay,
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the even-song,
And having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.

We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die,
As your hours do, and dry
Away,
Like to the summer rain,
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again."

On the other hand, a poem expressing antithetic or epigrammatic truth in formal phrase, like much of Pope's, can have little melodic charm, and inevitably tends to run into monotony. Indeed, it is curious to note how deficient in the sense of melody are nearly all English writers throughout the first three quarters of the eighteenth century.

Of course, however, no poet can do more than suggest the tune of his verse, and much must therefore be left to the taste of the individual reader. That is why it is such a rare pleasure to hear poetry well read — not by one who exaggerates all musical effects, as the professional elocutionist is prone to do, but by one who can render them with naturalness and delicacy. And that, too, is one reason why the careful and sympathetic reading of poetry aloud is such a profitable exercise in appreciation.

The last of the elements combining to produce the charm of poetic form is *quality* or *tone-color.* These terms — which correspond to what is called in music *timbre* — may be used to designate all those peculiarities of poetic utterance not included under time, accent, or pitch. For instance, just as the same note in the musical scale sounds very different on the violin from what it does on the piano, so the long vowel *a* has a very different sound from the long vowel *e*, though both are at the same pitch; both vowels are very different from the consonants; a labial or lingual consonant, very different from a guttural. Now all the poetic effects produced

by skillful variation, contrast, or correspondence of these different peculiarities of sound, we may call effects of quality or tone-color. These effects are legion, and for the most part too various to be reduced to definite rule. Some, however, are definite enough to be described and classified. Of these the most important and familiar is rhyme. The simple rule for rhyme in English is that rhyming syllables must have their initial consonants *different*, and all sounds after these initial consonants *alike*.

Rhyme has an absolute charm for the ear; it is pleasant in itself. It serves also to mark off for the ear groups of feet into lines or verses, and thus increases that effect of rhythm which is natural to all impassioned utterance. Rhyme inevitably emphasizes in meaning somewhat the words on which it falls, and so ought never — save for humorous effect — to fall on unimportant words. Moreover, in a couplet, the force of the second rhyming word is usually a little stronger than that of the first, and therefore that word should be the more important in meaning. Pope, our greatest master of the formal couplet, will be found to observe these rules. Double or dissyllabic rhymes serve to emphasize still more the words on which they fall, and sometimes by prolonging the rhyme give to the line a delaying grace of movement; but usually their obviously artificial character unfits them for use in serious verse. In humorous or satiric poetry, how-

ever, double rhymes and even rhymes of three or four syllables are often employed with striking effect; they afford opportunity for oddities of emphasis and give the pleasant shock of surprise always excited by difficulties ingeniously overcome. Byron's *Don Juan* is full of such rhymes, of which this oft-quoted *tour de force* may suffice as an example: —

> "But — oh! ye lords of ladies intellectual,
> Inform us truly, have they not hen-pecked you all?"

Browning had a marvellous mastery of these ingenuities; but he always employed them — as in *Old Pictures in Florence*, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, *The Flight of the Duchess* — to express some quaint or freakish humor. The derisive address to his critics, in the closing sections of *Pachiarotto*, fairly revels in seeming impossibilities of rhyme: —

> "Here shall my whistling and singing
> Set all his street's echoes a-ringing,
> Long after the last of your number
> Has ceased my front court to encumber,
> While, treading down rose and ranunculus,
> You *Tommy-make-room-for-your-uncle* us!
> Troop, all of you — man or homunculus,
> Quick march! For Xantippe, my housemaid,
> If once on your pates she a souse made
> With what, pan or pot, bowl or *skoramis*
> First comes to her hand — things were more amiss!
> I wouldn't for worlds be your place in —
> Recipient of slops from the basin!
> You, Jack-in-the-green, leaf-and-twiggishness
> Won't save a dry thread on your priggishness!

While as for Quilp-Hop-o'-my-thumb there,
Banjo-Byron that twangs the strum-strum there —
He'll think as the pickle he curses
I've discharged on his pate his own verses!"

Rhyme intensifies the effect of rhythm that, as we have seen, is natural to all heightened or impassioned feeling. Hence rhyme is an appropriate form, not only for the more animated or tuneful lyric, but for all verse which is the immediate utterance of strong emotion; on the other hand, that grave, reflective poetry, which stirs the emotions by the presentation of impressive truth, will usually best find expression in blank verse. In such poetry rhyme seems not demanded by any intensity or eagerness of feeling, and it is open to the further objection that it is liable to check the consecutiveness of the poet's thought. Dryden, it is true, succeeded in writing masterpieces of argumentative verse in the heroic couplet, but hardly any one else has. And it may be questioned whether Dryden's most impressive passages of reflection are not to be found in his blank-verse dramas. Pope's success with the couplet in didactic verse is due to the fact that he never had any consecutive thought to express. Thinking in jets, he naturally wrote in couplets, and his verse falls apart into brilliant epigrams and maxims. Similarly, narrative or epic poetry, in which the emotion, though commanding, must be sustained and continuous, naturally falls into blank verse.

And for the drama, which must suggest the flexibility and naturalness of actual conversation, it would seem still more evident that blank verse is a better vehicle than rhyme.

Blank verse is undoubtedly the most difficult of metrical forms. For it is not to be thought of merely as prose, with the accent on alternate syllables, and broken into lines of uniform length. On the contrary, blank verse admits all the elements of metre except rhyme; and the absence of that demands all the more careful attention to quantity, movement, pause, melody, and the subtle charm of music. Good blank verse, therefore, requires of the poet not only a sustained elevation of feeling, but the nicest mastery of his art. Hardly more than a half dozen English poets in the last two centuries have attained to any eminent command of it.

When the poets have wished to combine the keenness of emotion, that best expresses itself in rhyme, with the continuity of thought or of narrative that demands blank verse, they have often had recourse to some form of stanza in which they might secure the musical charm of rhyme, while at the same time reducing to a minimum its interrupting emphasis. There could hardly be a better example of this than Tennyson's *In Memoriam*. This is a poem suffused with the deepest emotion, yet concerned largely with the most difficult problems that confront the

thought of our age. Tennyson was to render in the *In Memoriam* his own message upon the deepest truths that man may meditate; while yet he could not suffer his poem to fall for a moment into the tone of cold discussion. He adopts a simple, yet really subtle, metrical arrangement. He writes in four-line rhyming stanzas; but if, as is usual in the quatrain, the lines had rhymed alternately for near half a thousand stanzas, the result would have been an intolerable monotony of sing-song. By making the first line rhyme with the fourth, and the second with the third, the metrical effect is at once entirely changed. The stanza now preserves the music and the pathos of rhyme, and yet the rhyme is not insistent or wearisome. How gracefully successive stanzas of this form may be linked together in continuous narrative or reflection is well shown in that lovely section, number eighty-five, descriptive of the sunset wind that follows showers, slowly rolling backward the volumed clouds till all the round of heaven is clear, from the glowing western twilight to the peaceful, orient star:—

"Sweet after showers, ambrosial air,
  That rollest from the gorgeous gloom
  Of evening over brake and bloom
And meadow, slowly breathing bare

The round of space, and rapt below
  Through all the dewy-tasselled wood,
  And shadowing down the horned flood
In ripples, fan my brow and blow

The fever from my cheek, and sigh
  The full, new life that feeds thy breath
  Throughout my frame, till Doubt and Death,
Ill brothers, let the fancy fly

From belt to belt of crimson seas,
  On leagues of odor streaming far,
  To where in yonder orient star
A hundred spirits whisper 'Peace.'"

The second of what we may term peculiarities of quality is Alliteration. Alliteration is the repetition of a consonant, usually the initial consonant of a syllable, at short intervals. These alliterated syllables, as a rule, are those which bear the metrical accent. The regular method of marking rhythm in Old English poetry, alliteration is at present only a secondary and incidental charm of verse. If conscious or obtrusive, it is likely to offend as artificial; but irregular, spontaneous, and largely disguised, it lends a grace which, though often unrecognized, would be missed if absent. It often serves, moreover, to add a slight emphasis to important words, and to accentuate the division of a passage into phrases. All our most finished modern verse is veined with it throughout. Tennyson, perhaps our greatest master of all niceties of the poet's art, will furnish exquisite examples on almost every page.

"Night slid down one long stream of sighing wind,
And in her bosom bore the baby sleep."

"The twinkling laurel scattered silver lights."

"A land where all things always seemed the same!
And round about the keel with faces pale,
Dark faces pale against that rosy flame,
The mild-eyed, melancholy Lotos-eaters came."

"A league of grass, wash'd by a slow, broad stream,
That stirr'd with languid pulses of the oar,
Waves all its lazy lilies and creeps on."

"Love took up the harp of Life and smote on all the chords with might;
Smote the chord of Self, that, trembling, pass'd in music out of sight."

"Sunset, and evening star,
And one clear call for me!
And may there be no moaning of the bar,
When I put out to sea."

But even more important, though more difficult to classify, are the metrical effects produced by the nice alternation and adaptation of *vowel* sounds. The poet with a fine sense of the music of verse will not only avoid the monotonous recurrence of the same vowel sound and secure such alternations as are melodious, but he will subtly adapt the tone-color of his vowels to his meaning. For this is quite possible. The literal imitation of sounds by language is called onomatopœia, and is common in vivid description, when the poet's intense imagination unconsciously constrains the phrase to echo his meaning. Thus, in these lines which describe Sir Bedivere bearing the dying Arthur up the steep, the verse climbs over rough consonants and pants in monosyllables till the summit is r—hed,

when the broad water opens suddenly upon the sight: —

> "Dry clash'd his harness in the icy caves
> And barren chasms, and all to left and right
> The bare, black cliff clang'd round him, as he based
> His feet on juts of slippery crag that rang
> Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed heels —
> And on a sudden, lo! the level lake,
> And the long glories of the winter moon."

But there is a higher and finer kind of onomatopœia where the verse makes no attempt at literal imitation, but rather suggests by analogies of sound and movement sentiment and moral quality. Now in this subtler adaptation of sound to meaning the vowels play the most prominent part. For there seems to be a certain natural suggestiveness in the vowel sounds which makes them the soul of poetic utterance. Thus the broad, open vowels, as compared with the short, close ones, demand a greater volume of sound; they are more naturally prolonged, and so affect the quantity of the verse; and, what is most important of all, they are instinctively uttered at a lower pitch, and so affect the melody or tune of the verse. For all three of these reasons, and perhaps for others not so obvious, the broad and open vowels seem fitted to express not only wide reaches of space or time, but also noble, solemn, or imposing conceptions. Smaller truths, daintier fancy, lighter and livelier movement, on the other hand, find echo in the short and close

vowel sounds. Notice how, in these lines from Tennyson's *Ulysses*, the broad vowels combine with the delaying liquids and labials and the skillfully lengthened pauses to give the effect of solemn, boding calm, —

> "The long day wanes; the slow moon climbs; the deep
> Moans round with many voices."

Contrast with this the shimmering silence of that dell through which breaks the voice of Jephthah's daughter, —

> "All night the splintered crags that wall the dell
> With spires of silver shine"

In Keats's famous line from the *Eve of St. Agnes*, it is the vowels quite as much as the consonants that make us instinctively purse our lips to sip the —

> "Lucent syrops tinct with cinnamon."

For opposite vowel effect take these wonderful lines from his *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, —

> "I saw their starved lips in the gloam
> With horrid warning gapèd wide."

We unconsciously strive to adapt the tone of our speech to the tone of our thought, in small matters or in great King Richard cries, —

> "Not all the water in the rough, rude sea
> *Can wash the balm from an anointed king!*"

and Shallow calls to the tavern waiter to bring him, "A joint of mutton, and any *pret*

kickshaws!" Human speech even at its best is, indeed, too poor and crude an instrument for any perfect harmony of this kind between sound and sentiment. But though we may never hope to set—

"Perfect music unto noble words,"

yet the poet by delicate felicities of tone, by a thousand suggestions of melody and movement, never to be explained or classified, may approximate indefinitely to that ideal, and intensify the meaning of his lines by all the keener, more elemental significance of music. This harmony may best be observed in somewhat extended passages or in complete poems, where the sentiment, in ways that can be felt but not described, determines at every point the melody or tune of the verse. To illustrate it here would therefore be too long; but consider, as brief examples, what wonderful magic of blended thought, image, and melody in such lines as these:—

"Our birth is but a sleep and a forgetting:
The Soul that rises with us, our life's Star,
Hath had elsewhere its setting,
And cometh from afar:
Not in entire forgetfulness,
And not in utter nakedness,
But trailing clouds of glory do we come
From God who is our home!"

or,

"The cloud-capt towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea all which it inherits shall dissolve,

subjective poetry is lyric; the drama is objective poetry in the subjective manner.

The essential characteristic of the epic is that it is objective and narrative; it is the recital of events outside the singer. Hence it is logically and chronologically the first poetry. For men regard with emotion external occurrences long before they reach the stage at which they study the emotions within themselves. Emotional observation always precedes analysis. Hence the earliest poetry of any nation is likely to be epic. This primitive epic is usually without any impress of individual authorship. It is the work of a race rather than of a man. It grows up by the slow accretion of legend; and though it may often bear the marks of the last and most strenuous genius who has revised it, yet it is not in strictness personal. It is not one man's view of life; it is the view of a race or of an age. And in its later developments epic poetry is almost sure to be retrospective. For the epic demands large, heroic action that can in some way be isolated from the tangled mass of minor events and thrown up into perspective. Such isolation it seems difficult to give to contemporary action: the foreground of events in our modern life is too crowded. Moreover, as the mutual relations of individuals in our modern society become more numerous and more complicated, no one man counts for much. The days of the hero and the crowd seem to be over;

it is the day of the equality of men and of the organization of effort. Taste varies somewhat from age to age, doubtless; heroism and adventure lose their charm in one generation only to find it again in the next. But the general movement of evolution in society must make epic poetry rarer in these later days, and give to it more and more an antiquarian air. Yet one would fain believe that genuine epic poetry can never lose its charm. We shall have variations of taste: now the historic epic, like Walter Scott's, will be preferred; now the pure romantic or picturesque, like that of William Morris; but the fascination of the story-teller will never quite pass away. There will always be readers glad to turn from the complicated, troubled, introspective life of to-day to the picture of a large, simple, heroic past. And that epic will have the most during power in which the story holds us, not merely by strangeness of incident or beauty of image,—as in most of the works of William Morris, Rossetti, or Swinburne,—but by its exhibition of the primary and universal virtues of human character—bravery, truth, affection.

The lyric is the most nearly universal form of poetry. It arises very early; it runs through all subsequent stages of historical development and through all grades of society. That it should be natural, for it is the purest, most typical form of poetry. Here the emotional purpose wh [illegible]

tinguishes poetry from other forms of composition is at its height; narration and reflection in the pure lyric are lost in personal feeling. And this high emotional value of the lyric naturally results in giving to it—as its name implies—a more musical form than any other variety of poetry possesses. In the lyric we find all the rarest witcheries of the metrical art. Moreover, as the expression of *individual* emotion, it gives utterance to feelings as manifold and varied as the infinite possibilities of personality. It has a voice for the whole gamut of emotion,—love, fear, joy, doubt, pity, anger, hope, devotion.

In these latter days the lyric seems to be taking the place of all other varieties of poetry. The work of nearly all the most eminent poets for near a hundred years—Burns, Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold—is largely lyrical in temper, and the best of it is lyrical in form. The epic element in literature seems nowadays mostly confined to the novel; we seldom find that sustained emotion which carries a long, objective composition through at the pitch requisite for poetry. Still less have we patience for philosophic or reflective poetry, unless—like Tennyson's *In Memoriam* or much of Browning's verse—it is so penetrated with emotion as to take on lyric quality. Indeed, the great poets of every age, although the main bent of their genius may have been epic or dramatic, have almost always felt some impulse to

writes a great drama must do. He must conceive a large group of independent, various characters, and must conceive them vividly and intensely; he must devise a great action. These things, to be sure, the novelist must also do. But the dramatist must develop his great action entirely out of the influence of these characters upon each other, and he must tell it in their own words. He cannot be allowed a single syllable of explanation, comment, or analysis in his own person. Nor is he at liberty to call upon accident, unforeseen contingency, to help out his plot; all must be the outcome of the forces of character embodied in his persons. Then he has but three hours in which to exhibit these characters and develop their action; consequently he can show them only at some crucial points of the story, when what they are saying and doing will have an obvious bearing on the catastrophe. Yet he must not make his play seem merely a series of striking and critical junctures, or it will fall into melodrama; on the contrary, he must give it the appearance of being in the plane of actual life. To that end, if he be a really great dramatist, he will be careful *not* to confine himself—as the epic poet does—to a few heroic figures raised above the level of common experience and isolated from average humanity. He will rather introduce common, dull, and stupid folk and poor devils—as Shakspere does in *Henry IV.* for example—to make us feel that his scene is the real world we know, where all

sorts and conditions of men are jostling. Yet to this almost infinite variety of human experience confined in the little room of the three hours' play, he must give some common direction and some unity of feeling, and he must lift the language of it all into poetry without destroying the verisimilitude of conversation. When one reflects on how all this is done in a great play by Shakspere, one is filled with ever growing wonder at the genius that attained such supreme success in so difficult a field.

Whether we may ever hope to see again a genuinely great school of English drama, may perhaps be doubtful. Certainly we have seen little that is great for a century and a half. Drama in its strictest form seems not likely to be written unless called for by the stage, and the modern stage hardly demands the highest literary work. No great literature will aim merely to amuse. It is too deeply freighted with thought; its emotion is too deep and serious. There is perhaps nothing in the nature of things to prevent a poet from writing a really great drama without regard to its representation upon the stage. This is possible, but it hardly seems probable. For so soon as the poet forgets that his piece must conform to the conditions of dramatic representation, he begins to *be less concise and concentrated in expression;* he expands his description and soliloquy; he catches the novelist's trick of analysis; and so his work loses action and life. Moreover, he is pted

to intrude his own personality, and thus give his work a lyrical and subjective character which is inconsistent with the highest dramatic quality. Certainly the modern poets who have attempted drama have fallen considerably short of success. Tennyson's dramas are interesting historical studies; they contain many beautiful and a few striking passages; they only just miss of success — but they miss it. Lacking in effective dramatic situation, in rapid action, they are most of all lacking in independent characters. We never quite forget that the actors are reciting verses composed for them by Alfred Tennyson. Browning's genius was much more dramatic than Tennyson's, yet his dramas are his least successful work. He could create independent characters, but he could hardly create more than one or two at a time. His dramas, therefore, lack variety and breadth. There are not all sorts and conditions of men in them — only heroes and heroines. His plays also lack action and development; they are all soliloquy and catastrophe. Browning is a superb master of the dramatic monologue, a drama in which there is but one person for each scene, and in which the action is virtually consummated when the piece begins. *The Ring and the Book* is a wonderful series of such monologues.

But whatever be the future of any particular form of poetry, we may confidently predict that in some of its forms poetry will prove the most abiding

kind of literature. As it was the earliest, so it will surely be the latest. For it is the most natural and typical form of expression for that emotion which is of the essence of literature. Other literary forms may come and go, may be of comparatively recent growth like the novel, or may seem likely to die out like oratory; but poetry, the utterance of pure emotion in artistic forms, that will last as long as the race lasts.

For poetry is not so much the ornament as the flower of life, in vital relation with the very roots of national being Nothing so surely determines the character of a people at any period. The student might better know — could he know but one — the great poetry of any century than to know the succession of its rulers or the statistics of its industry. Because the poetry will give him the gauge of that emotion which is the spring of all activity, the exponent of all opinion, the essence of all philosophy.

Conversely, if we are to decide what poetry of to-day is most likely to be read a century hence, we may without hesitation select that which truthfully depicts the deepest and healthiest emotion of to-day. One risks little in predicting that, for lack of this, the new romantic poetry of the later Victorian period is destined to have only a limited and subordinate fame. It is detached from our age, consciously and purposely so Wearying of the moral urgency of our literature, the men of

this school — Rossetti, Swinburne, Morris — go back to the Middle Ages, to romantic myth and legend, that they may escape the importunate life of to-day; and in this old material they find, not as the great epic singers do, noble and universal motives, but rather affected picturesque action, hectic passion, and mediæval scenery. But when the next century shall pass its verdicts upon the work of this, the verse of this school is sure to be ranked below that of Arnold and Browning and Tennyson, who wrought their poetry out of the deepest thought and feeling of their own time. Still less may any man hope to command the future merely by ingenious mastery of poetical technique, by nice handling of rondeaux and villanelles, or by any degree of dexterity in cutting heads on cherry-stones. Specimens of such delicacy in the manipulation of phrase may indeed survive for ages, like gems, in the admiration of posterity. But poetry that is to be sure of immortality, and to be accounted great forever, must be made of deep, and enduring, and universal emotion.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

Prose Fiction

Measured merely by its amount, prose fiction is by far the most important variety of literature to-day. Nor is it simply the bulk of this literature that renders it so important. Perhaps more original creative genius is expended in the novel at present than in poetry or any other form of literature; and it is certain that no other form of writing exerts so wide an influence. The book that is read by everybody, learned and unlearned, by the scholar and the idler, is nowadays always a novel. It does not follow, indeed, that the popular novel is likely, in most cases, to attain a lasting fame; the book that all the world is reading to-day is often the book that all the world will forget to-morrow. Yet such works do secure, at all events, the first object of a book: they are *read* by all sorts and conditions of men; and they move, if somewhat languidly, a vast mass of popular sentiment. Such is the penetrative power of the novel that it is coming to be a favorite vehicle for the conveyance of doctrine, economic, social, or religious. The phenomenal though temporary success of several "purpose-novels" within the last few ye

the immense relish with which the public swallows such fiction-coated instruction.

Nor does there seem to be any reason why the vogue of the novel should decline in the near future. While it affords opportunity for the exercise of a wide-ranging imagination and of a nice literary art, it is at the same time the one form best adapted to that high average of middle-class intelligence and the consequent general diffusion of the reading habit which are so characteristic of our modern democratic civilization. The modern novel was evolved as soon as there came to be a very large reading class to be entertained and good facilities for supplying that class with reading matter. These conditions did not obtain in England until about the beginning of the eighteenth century. Up to that time the demand for popular entertainment, so far as it had been met at all, had been met mostly by the stage. The stage had the advantage that it could appeal to the rudest as well as to the most cultivated classes, and did not even require of its auditors that they should know how to read. But it tended to cater largely and increasingly to the grosser elements in its audience, and principally for that reason declined in influence after the first quarter of the seventeenth century. Moreover, the acted drama was available as a rule only in large towns. As intelligence advanced, and the number of readers increased, especially among the middle class outside the towns, it was inevitable that the

story in some form should get itself told in print. For the story is an easier, more spontaneous variety of literature than the drama, and not governed by so strict laws of artistic form. The writer of the story is bound by no conventional rules of method or structure; he may write a three-volume novel or a three-page sketch. He has only to tell his story in his own way, as best he can. And he enjoys the utmost range of theme; the whole field of human nature and incident is open to him. There are, perhaps, fewer general principles to govern either matter or treatment in fiction than in any other department of literature.

On the other hand, the novel is the easiest kind of reading. On a lower emotional key than poetry or the drama, its characters described and its action expanded into narrative, it makes less demand than any other kind of reading upon the imagination and sympathies of the reader. A great drama like *Othello* or *Hamlet*, no man can read appreciatively without finding his imagination kept upon the stretch, without constantly proposing to himself the deepest questions as to character and motive, without feeling his emotions so heightened as to move naturally in sympathy with the poetic diction and measure of the play. But in the novel, even in the great novel, the reader finds this work mostly done for him. He needs to bring to the book only an intelligently receptive attitude of mind. Most readers would

take it somewhat as an affront if their novel made any exactions upon their intellect, or required any other than a pleasantly passive mood of feeling. They take a novel as they take a beverage: it must have a pleasant taste, be easily swallowed, afford a momentary stimulation, and not require to be digested. This, by the way, is what renders the novel such an efficient medium for inculcating any sort of doctrine. The average reader doesn't expect to think while reading a novel, and doesn't think; while he is in that easy temper you may quietly go on begging the question without awaking his logic. The story is a sort of grateful anæsthetic, under the influence of which he will calmly endure almost any operation upon his intellect.

Of course this general popularity of fiction is too often fatal to the permanence of the individual novel. The book we read so easily we never read twice. We rank the novel as light literature, and no light literature is ever great literature. Most of the swarm of novels issuing new every season have as short a life as the flies of a summer. But not all. Some of the greatest and most enduring work of this century has doubtless been done in fiction, and all the characteristics of good literature discussed in the preceding chapters may be found embodied in the writings of Scott, Thackeray, George Eliot, or Hawthorne.

In attempting to estimate the permanent value

of a work of fiction, we must attend first to its theme, and secondly to the manner in which that theme is treated. The term *theme* is used here broadly to include not only the plot or course of action in the novel, but the persons whose character largely determines this plot. As to the choice of theme, while it is true that the whole field of human character and experience as he can conceive it is open to the novelist, it is idle to say that all things in that field are of equal value We shall estimate the theme by the rank and the power of the sympathetic emotion it is able to evoke. One of the perennial motives of the human mind, for instance, is curiosity, the love of strange or unexpected things. It is doubtful whether the average man ever reads anything with so much interest as he reads the morning paper — and he probably reads the least important things with most interest. Now the same idle curiosity which glances over the morning paper for "news," is likely to be attracted, in imaginative writing, by unusual incident, adventure, strange collocation of circumstance. Such a reader may not have much appreciation of character, and does not understand varieties of human nature very different from his own; but he can without much effort imagine the familiar external circumstance of life altered in some striking ways. The novelist, knowing how universal is this curiosity and how easily it is touched, is always tempted to appeal to it. Hence

the tale of mere adventure or tangled plot, the interest of which resides entirely in surprising or improbable incident. It should seem needless to say that work of this sort can never be of much permanent value.

Yet it must not be inferred, on the other hand, that the element of narrative is of little importance in fiction. There are some recent critics who tell us that only children and people whose minds have not grown up can any longer be expected to care for a story. Besides, they say, the stories are all told; the hardened novel reader knows them all, and can always safely predict the end from the beginning. Moreover, the novelist, they urge, if he wish to depict life as it is, must avoid the story because he knows the story must be false. Stories in fact do not happen. Human life does not run into plots; it stumbles blindly on for a time, over a well-worn road, now impelled and now diverted by circumstances—and then stops short. But in contradiction of all such criticism as this, we must insist that precisely this element of plot in human life, and only this, is of interest to art. Mere aimless action or accidental event has no significance for the artist. He depicts human life; but human life is always a struggle to force circumstance into some unity of plan and shape it to some end. And it is only in this struggle that the power and charm of character, its pathos and its sublimity, are revealed. The man's life may end

in success or in tragic failure; but in any case, if it be worth a place in art, it must be shown to have method and direction, it will fall into story. Every great novel, therefore, will be seen to have a strongly marked plot. If it have not, it is safe to say that its characters are but feeble or feebly imagined. Many modern novels might be mentioned which, for all their exquisite manner and delicate analysis, fail to hold our interest, simply because nothing happens in them and we see no reason why anything *should* happen.

But while the novelist can never forego the charm of plot without losing a great and perfectly legitimate source of interest, his plot ought not to be merely external and arbitrary, imposed upon the characters from without. It is rather determined by the persons themselves; the outcome of those forces of character which it is the chief purpose of the novelist to portray. It is the story that is in human lives. That is not a great plot, therefore, which proves merely the ingenuity of the author and excites the mere curiosity of the reader; that is the great plot which shows how circumstance is bent to personality. It follows that the distinction commonly made between the romance and the novel, though sometimes convenient, is not very clear or important. For the interest of the romance, as well as of the novel, proceeds from the characters; only in the romance these characters are brought to the [illegible]

or striking or unfamiliar circumstance; while, on the other hand, the novel of society often derives its interest very largely from that prying curiosity which idle minds feel about the smaller incidents of life.

The value of a novel as a picture of human life will evidently depend upon the amount and rank of the life it can portray. But not all the more important phases of life are sure to be interesting, and the first necessity of a novel is that it should interest. The novelist, therefore, must select such motives as are evidently among the deciding forces of human action and, at the same time, appeal powerfully to general sympathy. One such motive he can always find. He can always tell a love-story. Probably nine-tenths of all fiction is built up around the passion of early love between the sexes. This is inevitable, and that for a variety of reasons. The passion of love between the sexes is the most universal and normal of all passions. No other is so sure to have the comprehension and sympathy of every reader. And no other passion, which can be exhibited in isolation as this can, influences so profoundly the course of individual life. It is more imperious than any other; men make more sacrifices for it.

> "Many waters cannot quench love,
> Nor the floods drown it,"

as one of the oldest of love-songs says. When healthy and normal, it quickens reverence and all

gentler feeling, refines and spiritualizes the man; when unhealthy or misplaced, it can set all the currents of feeling out of course and ruin the character. This passion is also the most pleasing of motives. All the world loves a lover. Whatsoever of beauty or grace there is in any character is sure to be heightened by love. It is preëminently the æsthetic passion, and quickens the imagination as no other can.

> "The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
> Are of imagination all compact,"

says Shakspere; and indeed every lover is, or ought to be, a little of a lunatic and more of a poet. He idealizes and he aspires The depiction of the passion of love, therefore, naturally calls out all bright and beautiful imagery and suggestion. We see through the eyes of the lover again. Who ever heard of an ugly heroine? Some of our modern analytic novelists have not succeeded in making their heroines very engaging, and that must be accounted a very serious grievance against them; but they have not ventured upon absolute ugliness. Love without beauty, to the lover, is impossible. Moreover, love is the passion of youth, and whatever retains or reproduces for us our youth is sure to be a pleasure. The charm of all art will probably be found to be at bottom just this — it quickens and intensifies the sense of life. Art *is* the spontaneous yet ordered overflow of life. It knows no such thing as age

is what makes it so precious to us men and women. For the one inevitable misfortune of life is to grow old; to feel the spring of our life less elastic, our perceptions less new and vivid, our joys less fresh, our anticipations less eager and confident. No added philosophy of life's afternoon can ever quite atone for the faded poetry of its morning. But it is the office of art to renew this early freshness of feeling in us. And it may be doubted whether, for most men, anything else will do this so well as a vivid and healthy picture of early love. We may outgrow any interest in the merely appetitive side of love, and in its lusher sentimentalities; but we never get beyond a sympathy for its tenderness and beauty and aspiration. Or, if we do, it is time we were buried. Tennyson, well turned of eighty, writes a pretty pastoral drama of true love under the greenwood tree, and Browning the aged, in one of his very latest and sweetest lyrics, sings the *Summum Bonum* of life

"In the kiss of one girl."

To all these reasons for employing the passion of early love as a predominant motive in fiction, is to be added the fact that it always suggests a story, and so gives to the work of the novelist something of plan or unity. Love, like other fevers, has what we call its "course"; and, the cynic wickedly says, ends in marriage. This often decides the plot and the limits of the novel. Mar-

riage is in most novels the catastrophe; to pursue the story further might be anticlimax.

For all these reasons love must always be a prominent motive in the majority of novels. Yet these very facts will show that the novel which makes this passion of early love of man and maid its exclusive, or even its predominant, motive is not likely to attain the highest power or rank as literature. Great literature must exhibit the great possibilities and exertions of our human nature,—strong passions and strong will, depth and breadth of experience. But in the novel of early love the hero and heroine must be young, inexperienced people. We do not ask much wisdom from sweet sixteen; and a few years more do not much increase either the wisdom or the sweetness. Youth is the fair frontispiece of life, but for experience, passion, power, we must read further in the book. Now every novelist of eminence has felt this difficulty. The heroine, in particular, gives him trouble. If she be engaging, that is much; if she have power to inspire the hero to heroism, that is perhaps enough. This is usually the function of Walter Scott's heroines: they are not so much great themselves as the cause of the greatness that is in others. Similarly in the novels of Thackeray, Dickens, and many other writers of less note, the hero and heroine—at all events, the heroine—are not characters of much evident force or experience. It is this which most frequently

provokes the sneers of French critics; our heroines, they say, are insipid, able neither to feel nor to inspire a grand passion.

To supply this deficiency of interest, the masters of fiction have had recourse to several different plans. Sometimes the novelist has frankly relinquished the effort to concentrate the sympathy of his readers upon the hero or heroine, and has relegated them, one or both, to a subordinate position. This is what Scott does. His young people are very charming persons who are to make a happy and fairly early marriage at the end of the last volume; but the interest of the novel does not reside in them so much as in the great march of events in which they are involved. In the *Old Mortality* it is not the lady and the pair of her lovers that we care most for; it is Claverhouse, and Balfour of Burley, and Ephraim MacBriar, and Cuddie Headrigg. Or sometimes the novelist abandons the motive of that early love which leads to marriage, and makes his hero and heroine older people whose love has been tried by the harder experience of adult life. Thus the novel becomes a study of mature experience, portraying love, perhaps, but love as combined with manifold other motives. George Eliot's *Romola*, *Middlemarch*, *Daniel Deronda*, are examples of this kind of motive. Or the novelist, representing his leading characters as mature persons, while still using the passion of love as his central motive, makes the passion irregular,

unlawful, or in some way in such conflict with circumstance and social law as to bring out all its strength and tragic possibilities. This is commonly the method of the French novel of the better class, which most frequently turns upon a violation of the Seventh Commandment. This is especially so in French literature, partly because of laxer ideas of social morality among the French, and partly because in their social system marriage is a matter of prudent arrangement with which the affections of the contracting parties usually have little to do—often the beginning of love, but not its culmination. Yet this motive is found very largely in the imaginative literature of every nation, simply because it gives opportunity for the depiction of love in adult characters and in its most strenuous forms. Nor can we maintain that this theme is a forbidden one. The whole field of human life is open to the literary artist, and we cannot debar him, by any considerations either of art or of morality, from the use of so powerful a motive as is afforded by marital jealousy and infidelity.

But we may insist, on grounds both of art and morality, that this motive shall be treated in a sane and noble manner. A comparison of such dramas as Shakspere's *Othello*, or *Cymbeline*, or *Winter's Tale*, with such works as many of the modern French school,—say of Maupassant,—will show the difference between the noble and the ignoble treatment of the same theme. The m[illegible]

novel is often largely a study of mere erotic emotion, and therefore a tragedy of the appetites rather than a tragedy of the soul. In Shakspere's work, on the contrary, this element is hardly present as a literary motive at all. The great play is the struggle of affection, of doubt, of suspicion; it is the mental agony caused by the sin, not the mere appetite, that is exhibited. Nothing more profoundly and spiritually pathetic can be conceived than Othello's moan, —

"O the pity of it, Iago! O the pity of it!"

It is an incidental result of the unworthy treatment of this motive that, in order to give probability to his action, the novelist usually finds it necessary to make the heroine a person of undeveloped character and crude emotions, often of narrow intelligence and inferior social position; a woman quite without moral or spiritual attractiveness. This charge may be brought against many modern English novels that are accounted powerful. Indeed, one sometimes fears that the good woman is likely to disappear from modern fiction altogether. The hectic, ill-balanced, morbid persons that take her place are a libel upon the beauty and charm of healthy womanhood.

There is a further danger in the use, not only of this particular motive, but of all irregular or excessive passion, that the novelist, even if he does exhibit passion and not mere appetite, will mistake

violence for strength, and will give us no purifying or uplifting suggestions from his work. The charge may be justly made against much so-called powerful fiction, that its passion, instead of being really strong, is hysterical or melodramatic, in some way morbid and so enfeebled. For genuine strength of passion must always imply some sanity and force of will, some power of resistance. There cannot be much *strength* of passion in a nature that has no poise or self-control, and that every puff of emotion may overset.

More generally, it must be urged that the exhibition of passion of any kind *merely for its own sake* as an end, without reference to its relation to character or its result in conduct, is never good art. The office of art is, indeed, to appeal to our emotions; but the value of this appeal depends — as shown in a previous chapter — on the grounds and the quality of the emotions excited. The spectacular theory of art, which makes of the passions and struggles of life a pleasing show, is unworthy and is sure to end in unwholesome sensationalism. Passion, which is simply strenuous emotion of some sort, active or passive, always has relation to some end, and when shown in art ought to be contemplated with reference to that end. Healthy life is not all feeling; it issues not in emotion but in action. And a healthy art will represent life so. Even the passive emotions it will depict in their relation to the moral forces of life. For sympathy

that is aimless and spends itself in mere emotion always enervates. Appetites long fed upon this sort of literature become jaded, and hunger for what the French call a new shiver. It will be found, therefore, that painful or depressing emotion for its own sake is never characteristic of the greatest art. If such emotion is exhibited at all, it is exhibited in order to show the power of the human spirit to endure or to subdue it. For art, at all events great art, always inspires and enlarges; it strengthens the forces of life, does not depress or enfeeble them. Matthew Arnold in a second edition of his works decided to withdraw one of his most ambitious poems, the *Empedocles on Etna*, precisely on the ground that it did not conform to this condition of art. In his preface he declared that art to be faulty, "in which suffering finds no vent in action; in which a continuous state of mental distress is prolonged, unrelieved by incident, hope, or resistance; in which there is everything to be endured, nothing to be done. In such situations there is inevitably something morbid; in the description of them, something monotonous. When they occur in actual life they are painful, not tragic; the representation of them in poetry is painful also." Arnold's judgment upon this particular poem — as he himself afterwards felt — is too severe, for the whole effect of the *Empedocles* is to induce a high, stoic calm and resignation; but the principle is without question a true one, and it condemns a great deal of fiction

to a place far below the highest. The interest of many modern novels might be described as almost purely pathological: they are studies of morbid emotional conditions such as often imply positive nervous derangement. They make no appeal to our affections, our aspirations, or even to our righteous indignation; they only harrow our sensibilities — or try to. In general, the pessimistic or depressing note in literature is a sure sign of morbidness and a lack of robust life. We do not rise from the perusal of such literature with a heightened sense of the beauty of living and the vigor of the human spirit, but rather with sympathies sicklied and unnerved, or with a hopeless sense of submission to circumstance at once pitiless and prosaic. Surely it is not such an impression that a true art should leave upon us. We can give good critical reasons for our natural demand that a novel should, in some sense, turn out well. It may not end in sugared marital felicity, with "God bless you, my children," and ten thousand a year; but its total effect upon the emotions should be healthy and strengthening. Shakspere's most terrible tragedies brace and hearten our spirits. They never leave us with a sense of mere horror, or with a discouraged or nerveless feeling. Their close is often pitiful, sometimes supremely and solemnly tragic; yet we shut the book with a feeling of the beauty and value of the great virtues. Such art solemnizes and fortifies our souls. It meets Aris-

totle's requirement for tragedy; it "purifies the passions by pity and fear."

We must further protest, in the interests of art, against the doctrine, much preached of late, that anything whatever may be presented in literature, and presented in any way, provided only that it is "true to life"—a correct transcript of certain facts. Certain writers rather pride themselves on the lack of any purpose in fiction, save the desire to record some facts of human life accurately, with perfect liberty to choose whatever facts they please. Some follow M. Zola in the notion that the novel thus becomes of positive scientific value as an experiment in life, forgetting that you cannot have science and art in the same work. If the facts are actual facts of observation simply tabulated or recorded, and nothing is assumed or invented save a law which these observed facts are to confirm, why, you have indeed made a scientific experiment, but you have not made a novel. Your literary imagination has had nothing to do and you can have no place for the emotions. On the other hand, if you have invented both your facts and your law, that is, imagined your persons and their motives and acts, why then you have a novel, to be sure; but you no longer have a scientific experiment, for there can be no science based on imagined facts. But many novelists, especially younger ones, without going so far, do find the supreme if not the only test of excellence in the

work and the outward fact. It is not true that the selection of his facts is a matter of indifference, or a matter in which the artist is to be guided only by the principle of "truth"—that is of verisimilitude. It is not true that the great writer can work "without any regard to what the effect on the reader may be." The effect on the reader is the object of all his work. He writes to awaken emotion; and the value of the work will be decided by the amount and quality of the emotion he excites. He will therefore invent and select his material not solely under the condition that it shall be true to life, but also, and primarily, under the condition that it shall be such as to have upon the reader the most and the highest emotional effect. It is no sufficient justification for the plot of any novel that it can be matched in life. Doubtless there are phases of human nature more morbid, squalid, and depressing than any fiction; and it is just possible there are men and women more stupid than any that get into novels. But the object of art is not to show us all that is, but only that which is worth the showing. It will not turn away from any great department of human experience, it need not blink any facts; but it will never be content simply to harrow or offend our emotions by the realistic recital of pain or of pruriency. True art has for its highest function to present the ideal in the real.

We say then, in summary, that in so far as we

are measuring fiction by its themes, we shall give highest rank to that work which appeals not primarily to our curiosity for external incident, but rather to our interest in personal character; that presents the most of human life in its more important relations; and that selects from the whole field of human experience such persons and actions as shall, when truthfully depicted, move most powerfully our healthy and noble emotions.

As to the manner of treatment or handling in a work of fiction, doubtless no very specific rules can be given. Every writer will attest his own genius by the originality of his methods. But it may be noticed that the task of the novelist is essentially the same as that of the dramatist. Like the dramatist, he must present to us a group of persons in action so that we may see them vividly, understand their character, and follow with sympathetic interest their story. It is safe to say, then, that in general, the treatment is best which is least analytic and most dramatic. The characters of the novel, in this mode of treatment, seem always in the foreground themselves, and the story grows before our eyes in their action and dialogue. In recent times, when the novel of incident is depreciated, there is, indeed, a decided tendency to the opposite, or analytic method in the delineation of character. Our interest, it is urged, is in the character and motives of the persons of the novel,

not in their outward action. Action is of value only as revealing character. Great credit is therefore given to the novelist who can dissect out with subtlety the motives of his fictitious personages. The result is, we have novels in which next to nothing is done. Action and dialogue are both reduced to a minimum, and the space thus gained is occupied by minute and exhaustive exposition of motive. Now a certain amount of interpretation and comment is welcome in a novel — it is one of the peculiarities that differentiate the novel from the drama; but a little is enough. For the fatal objection to this analytic method is that it gives no help to our imagination. No amount of information and explanation at second hand about a person, real or fictitious, ever gives us any vivid notion of what sort of person he really is. For that, we must observe for ourselves what he does and what he says. To watch him a week and talk with him half an hour is better than volumes of analysis. Similarly, I want to see my man and woman in the novel for myself; I want them to do and say something themselves — to be doing and saying something all the time. Then I can make up my mind about them without the help of much interpretation from the novelist. No matter how wise, how profound, how intricate, the characters, — the more so the better, — but let the wisdom be evident *in* the characters, not in long parenthetical sermons by the author while the action waits. This intro-

spective, psychological manner, seen at its worst in such a book as Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister* (which Heaven forfend anybody should call by the pleasant name of novel!) is to be found in some of the best English fiction. All the later work of George Eliot, for example, is vitiated by it. Showing itself in excess for the first time in the *Middlemarch*, it steadily increased through her following books, till in the *Theophrastus Such* it pushes out the story altogether, and leaves nothing but the sermons.

Nor is this acute and elaborate analysis useless only for the imagination of the reader, it does not prove any clear and strong imaginative grasp on the part of the writer. To set persons before us in clear objective manner, so that we see them and can make up our mind about them promptly and decisively, is a far surer test of strong imagination than to talk about them and explain and analyze them endlessly. It is harder to create a man, even a man of fiction, than it is to tell how he would act and feel if only you *could* create him Accordingly, the verdict of posterity will probably be that the greatest novelists, as a rule, are those most objective and dramatic in manner Sometimes the novelist makes himself a sort of person in his story. That is, he introduces chat and comment of his own upon his characters; not, however, at all in the way of analysis or interpretation, but rather as if he were talking familiarly with the reader about them as

objective persons. Chaucer is always doing that, and he is one of the best of story-tellers. Among English novelists, Fielding and Thackeray are most in the habit of thus taking the reader into their confidence and discussing with him the persons of their own creation. But, if not carried to excess, this manner is a stimulus to our imagination; it seems to give objective reality and verisimilitude to the persons of the story.

The same reasons that exclude from the novel over analysis and interpretation may be urged against needless description. It is quite possible for a novel to be overburdened with description. All purely descriptive matter beyond that absolutely necessary to enable us to realize the surroundings of the action is of doubtful value. We must, of course, have some stage and setting for the figures we are to imagine. The imagination cannot set up objects in vacancy. Even the dramatist is obliged to give hasty, passing hints to our scene-painting fancy. These snatches of description, often exquisitely beautiful, —

> "How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this bank,"

or,

> "Yon moon that silvers all these fruit tree-tops,"

or,

> "Jocund day stands tip-toe on the misty mountain-tops,"

or,

> "What hour now? I think it lacks of twelve. The air bites shrewdly; it is very cold —"

these glimpses the novelist may expand into full pictures; and if it be done with skill and vivid imagination, the description will often very much heighten the impressiveness of the action. In the best imaginative literature the scene is always felt to be subtly in harmony with the sentiment and action. But when description is extended into word-painting for its own sake, and allowed to overlay or impede the action, it at once becomes a blemish. Even in some novels famous for their descriptive power or beauty, — as, for example, Blackmore's *Lorna Doone*, — there certainly is far too much mere scenery. In regard to this whole question of detail in the construction of a work of fiction, Robert Louis Stevenson, who was one of the *most direct and swift of modern story-tellers*, says: "Let the writer choose a motive, whether a character or passion . . . and allow neither himself nor any character in the course of the dialogue to utter one sentence that is not part and parcel of the business of the story or the discussion of the problem involved."

Yet any such rule as this must be liberally interpreted. For a great novel should have not only unity and rapidity of movement; it should have also life-likeness and breadth. And these latter qualities require a considerable amount of subsidiary detail. The novel, more than any other form of literature, is a picture of life as it is, a transcript of some chapter of human experience. And in real life every

person, however strenuous his individuality, is surrounded by a network of minor circumstance, and a company of minor people. The decisive actions of his life, however striking, are not really isolated; they are part and parcel of a tangled web in which all his neighbors are implicated. Now the problem of the novelist is to display clearly the character and motives of his leading personages, while at the same time he indicates the extent and complexity of those relations in which they are placed. Only so can his story seem made out of real human life. If he isolate his main characters and touch only the high points of their career, he will indeed give direction and swiftness to his narrative; but he will lose breadth and truth. This is the manner of the poet, not of the novelist. Accordingly, we find the novelist wisely introducing minor character and incident, a mass of detail which might at first seem to have little to do with either character or story, but which serves to give verisimilitude and life. Indeed, as we have seen, the modern realist sometimes very much overdoes this. He reduces his characters pretty much to a level of mediocrity, on the ground that there are no heroes and heroines in actual life as we are most of us living it, and he systematically diminishes the importance of plot, on the ground that life in fact does not run into plots; so that his story is often deficient alike in striking character and striking incident, but is a marvellously accurate and vivid

rendering of the multifarious small details that make up daily life. But, as we have insisted in a previous chapter, art is not life, it is not even an *exact transcript of life.* The most microscopic realism must select among the myriad facts of experience, and select on some principle. The really great novelist knows how to avoid both extremes, of poetic elevation and creeping realism. He concentrates our attention upon his leading personages, and in their action exhibits the nobler passions and the wider interests of life; but he sets these personages in just such a net of inevitable circumstance as surrounds us all, so that they shall seem to us not detached heroic figures, not poetic ideals, but living familiar men and women. Thus the charm of a great novel is often very like the charm of a book like Boswell's *Johnson*: it brings us into intimate acquaintance with a group of noble people, and at the same time it gives us a thrilling sense of the breadth, the raciness, the complexity, the mingled humor and pathos, joy and sorrow, of this great world of men in which we live.

In these days of haste there is a manifest tendency to cut down the novel into the briefest possible form, and supplant it by the short story. The short story has a manner and structure of its own. It renders an incident, a single phase of experience, an unique type of character. It is to the novel something like what the ballad is to the epic popularity, however, is due largely to mental

lence and to the demand for a form of literature that shall merely amuse. The influence of periodical literature, moreover, has had much to do with the immense increase of this form of fiction. It is a sore trial of patience to read a long novel by bits, a month apart; and writers of fiction have been tempted, for that reason, to reduce the element of plot in longer works to a minimum, so that the separate parts should be bits of character-study, not closely dependent on any connecting thread of narrative. And from this there is only one step further to writing a series of short, detached stories.

Yet the full-length novel will retain its place as the latest developed literary form, and the one best adapted to our age. It has greater breadth than any other form. It gives us at once the charm of poetry and the reality of life. It renders, as nothing else can, all the varied phrases of our complex modern society, and "shows the very age and body of the time, his form and pressure."

CHAPTER NINTH

SUMMARY

IT should be said again at the close of this discussion, as was said at the beginning, that the foregoing pages make no claim to cover the whole field of criticism. They aim to give only a few universal principles which lie at the foundation of literature, and which must, therefore, be the basis of our judgment upon the writings of every age Whether our author be Homer or Browning, Catullus or Burns, Sophocles or Shakspere, it is impossible to form an estimate of his permanent value which shall not rest upon a consideration of these four essential elements of his work,—*emotion, imagination, thought, form.* In the preceding chapters the attempt has been made to notice some of the questions sure to arise in the consideration of each of these elements, and some of the principles by which each of the four is to be measured.

But this does not exhaust the function of criticism. Nor is a power of just appreciation and sane judgment upon each of these elements of literature all the necessary equipment of a critic. By no means. The critic must often do far more than pronounce a verdict upon the absolute literary v ue

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But this does not exhaust the function of criticism. Nor is a power of just appreciation and sane judgment upon each of these elements of literature all the necessary equipment of a critic. By no means. The critic must often do far more than pronounce a verdict upon the absolute literary value

of his author. He may find it needful, for example, to measure the author, not merely by absolute standards like those here laid down, but also by standards of that past age in which his author wrote. He must distinguish between universal and merely historical interests. He must know how to make allowances for surroundings and influences that change with the centuries. He must put himself in his author's place: nay more, he must put himself, by turns, in the place of authors of different ages, that he may compare them, estimate aright the power of temporary fashion, and mark the current of literary tendency. To do all this demands full and accurate historical knowledge. No man can so ill afford to be ignorant of history as the critic. And if he would be thoroughly furnished for his work, he must be at home, not merely in the external history of politics and of states, but in that more intimate history of the human mind which finds expression in manners, in philosophy, in religion.

But if the critic often aims to do more than to render an estimate of absolute literary values, he often, on the other hand, aims to do less. There is much valuable writing which, though often called criticism, is, in fact, rather description or exposition. A large part of the work of the reviewer, for instance, must always be to describe the subject or plot of the work under review, to point out the strictly individual elements in it, to show what

is peculiar in the temper of the writer or new in his view of life, what is novel, or perhaps unique, in his manner. And the reviewer may stop here. But, in strictness, this is not yet criticism. It is one thing to describe faithfully, or even vividly, a work of letters; quite another, to estimate rightly its permanent value.

Nor does this little book venture to prescribe rules by which the principles it states are to be applied in the specific processes of criticism. It makes no attempt to lay down a definite Critical Method. There may be doubt whether such an attempt is ever likely to be very successful. The essential elements of literature are combined in such infinitely varied ways that no critical instrument can be devised to fit them all. Original genius cannot be expected to pour itself into any formal moulds or submit to any critical yardsticks. A work of art is too complex a thing to be measured by any such rigid and simple rules as test the validity of a syllogism or a geometrical theorem. And, on the other hand, even if the subject-matter of criticism were less subtle and varied, the critic himself would refuse to be tied up by any Critical Method. He must insist upon the free play of his own personality in the treatment of his theme. *Nullius addictus jurare in verba magistri* is a maxim which applies as well to the methods of the critic as to his verdicts. No two men can see their subject from precisely the

same point of view, or handle it in the same manner. Not only the charm but the value of literary criticism must always depend, in great part, upon the natural, unrestricted action of the critic's own personality. For the first requisite of any just criticism is that the critic should have brought himself into something like intimate personal sympathy with his author; and this he can never do through any formal apparatus or method. How his fundamental principles shall be applied, must, therefore, be left to the critic himself; it is enough if his final judgments are in accord with those principles.

To say this, however, is not to admit that criticism is nothing more than the personal impressions of a sympathetic reader. This theory of criticism — which it has become the fashion to call, by a name borrowed from the sister art of painting, "impressionist" — has found of late many advocates, especially among younger French writers, such as M. Anatole France and M. Jules Lemaître. But, however fascinating may be this expression of personal preference, — and no one would deny that it is often very fascinating indeed, — it cannot be accounted criticism. To accept such a conception of the function of criticism is to abandon all attempt to arbitrate between differing judgments, and to give up all distinctions of better or worse in letters. It substitutes individual taste, often individual caprice, for critical principle, and leaves us,

without any authority or certified literary tradition, at liberty to rank the fad of the hour along with the classic of the ages.

The truth is, no man's single preference can be accepted as an infallible guide. Probably even the most catholic critic has moods in which he would prefer Rudyard Kipling to William Shakspere; certainly he has moods in which he would prefer Robert Burns to John Milton. And there are doubtless many brilliant writers with whom such preferences would be constant. But the sane critic would never think of regarding such impressions as deliberate critical estimates. He knows that in literature, as in ethics, we all often like the second best better than we like the best. Our preferences need to be warranted by some larger reason. Criticism becomes, therefore, in great measure a matter of education. We may school ourselves to like what we know is highest, and be sure that if this liking becomes sincere, it will far outlast our temporary and unriper preferences. As the ablest of living critics[1] says, "Let us admit it with a good grace; let us put something above our tastes; and since there must be criticism, let us say that there cannot be any that is not *objective*."

Such objective criticism must certainly be based upon some general principles superior to the caprice of the individual, grounded in reason, and

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confirmed by general assent. These principles will not be very numerous; and if they are to be applied to the infinite variety of literary expression, they must of necessity be not precise, but large and comprehensive. Some of these principles it has been the effort of the preceding chapters to state and discuss.

APPENDIX

ILLUSTRATIVE REFERENCES

The principles laid down in the preceding pages, if correct and correctly stated, apply to all literature, and will therefore find illustration in any course of good reading, or even in almost any single masterpiece of literature. It has been thought, however, that the value of the book, for some readers, may perhaps be increased by bringing together here a considerable number of references to books or passages that may illustrate the leading principles of the text, and furnish material for critical discussion and decision. The number of books chosen for such reference has purposely been limited, and the same book often used to illustrate several different principles. The whole list of works cited, though it represents some seventy authors in all the great departments of literature, will be found to include few books that are not familiar, none that are not easily accessible, and few if any that are not of recognized and permanent value. Arranged in chronological order, at the close of this list of references, these works may serve as a fairly representative course of reading in the best English poetry and prose.

As the first two chapters are concerned with introductory matters that hardly admit such specific illustration, the references begin with the third chapter.

Titles of poetry and drama are in italics.

CHAPTER THIRD

The Emotional Element in Literature

P. 63. "Literature cannot appeal to the self-regarding emotions."

Why does not this rule exclude the expression of purely personal feeling in such poems as the following? —

Shakspere's *Sonnets*, 29, 30, 110, 146; Cowper's *My Mary*, *The Castaway*; Burns's *Highland Mary*; Shelley's *Lines Written in Dejection near Naples*.

P. 64. "Painful emotions are never a proper object of literary appeal."

Consider the effect of such passages as the following: —

Shakspere's *King Lear*, Act III., sc. 7; Webster's *The Duchess of Malfy*, Act IV.; Shelley's *The Cenci*; or, the dominant feeling of such modern novels as Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," "Jude the Obscure."

Pp. 66–67. Consider how painful or pathetic experiences are used to produce legitimate literary effects: —

1. In tragic drama.

Shakspere's *Hamlet*, *Othello*, *King Lear*.

2. In tragic narration.

Both in poetry, Browning's *The Ring and The Book* (especially sections vi. *Giuseppe Caponsacchi*, and vii. *Pompilia*); and in prose fiction, Scott's "Bride of Lammermoor," George Eliot's "Mill on the Floss."

3. In elegiac verse.

Dirge in Shakspere's *Cymbeline* (Act IV., sc. 2), Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, Wordsworth's "*Lucy*" Poems, Arnold's *Thyrsis*, Emerson's *Threnody*, Rossetti's *The Portrait*.

4. In lyric poetry of melancholy or doubt.

Burns's *To a Daisy*, Byron's *On This Day I Complete My Thirty-sixth Year*, Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind*, Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*, Clough's *The Stream of Life*, Arnold's *Dover Beach* and *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse*, Morris's *The Half of Life Gone*.

P. 82. The Justice or Propriety of Emotion.

Tennyson's *Maud*. What is the central motive of the poem? Is the poem, as some have said, a study of hysteria? Is the character of the hero fitted to excite strong emotional interest? Are his sentiments, especially those regarding the Crimean war, genuinely poetical?

Beside the minor poems of Byron, mentioned in the text, consider the melancholy of *Childe Harold*, especially in such passages as Canto I., stanzas 1–13, Canto II., stanzas 4, 7, 9, 12, 15.

Compare Wordsworth's *Michael* with some of his other poems on humble themes, as *Alice Fell*, *Simon Lee*, *The Idiot Boy*

Compare with the pathos of Dickens in the passages mentioned in the text (p. 84) the pathos of Thackeray, *e.g.* "Vanity Fair," ch. XVIII., "The Newcomes," ch. XXVI., "Pendennis," ch. LII., the essay "De Finibus" in "The Roundabout Papers."

P. 86. The Vividness or Power of Emotion.

This quality of good writing is so evident in all the best literature as hardly to need illustration; but for a few examples of vividness or power in various types of emotion, see —

Shakspere. The tragedies, throughout, and, in the comedies, such passages as *Twelfth Night*, Act II., sc 4; *A Winter's Tale*, Act III., sc. 2; *The Tempest*, Act IV., sc. 1, ll. 150–160.

Milton. *Paradise Lost*, Book I.; Sonnet, *On His Blindness*; *Samson Agonistes*, ll. 665–705, 1745–1758.

Burns. *Highland Mary, Farewell to Nancy, "Open the door to me, O," Tam Glen, The Jolly Beggars.*

Coleridge. *The Ancient Mariner.*

Wordsworth. *"Three years she grew," Ode to Duty, The Highland Reaper.*

Byron. *Childe Harold*, Canto III., stanzas 86–96; Canto IV., stanzas 178–184; *Manfred*, Act IV., sc. 4, ll. 1–40.

Shelley. *To a Skylark, To the West Wind, In Lechlade Churchyard, To Jane — The Recollection, The Cenci*, Act III., sc. 1, and Act V. throughout.

Keats. *Ode to a Nightingale, La Belle Dame sans Merci.*

Tennyson. *In Memoriam*, throughout.

Browning. *A Blot in the 'Scutcheon*, Act III.; *The Ring and The Book*, (*Giuseppe Caponsacchi*, and *Pompilia*), *Pippa Passes* (*Morning*), *Saul, Andrea del Sarto, James Lee's Wife, May and Death, Confessions.*

Rossetti. *The King's Tragedy.*

Morris. *The Haystack in the Floods.*

Swift. "Tale of a Tub," §§ 6, 9; "Argument against Abolishing Christianity," "The Examiner," Nos. 16, 21, 37; "The Drapier's Letters," No. 1; "Gulliver's Travels," Part III., ch. X.; Part IV., chs. I.–IV.

Burke. "Speech on Conciliation with America," "Speech to the Electors of Bristol" (first half), "Reflections on the Revolution in France" (first half), "Letter to a Noble Lord."

Carlyle. "Sartor Resartus," Book III., ch. VIII.; "Past and Present," Book I., ch. II.; "The French Revolution," Vol. II., Book IV., ch. VI.; Book VI., ch. VII.; Vol. III., Book IV., ch. VII.; "The Life of Sterling," ch. VIII.

Ruskin. "Modern Painters," Part V., ch. XX., §§ 44–49; Part VI., ch. X., §§ 23–24; "The Crown of Wild Olive," Lecture II.; "Fors Clavigera," Letters III.–V.

P. 93. The Continuity or Steadiness of Emotion.

For further examples of the failure to maintain emotion in the proper key, lapses into prose, see —

Byron. *Manfred*, Act II., sc. 4; *Childe Harold*, Canto IV., stanzas 175, 176. The fault may, indeed, be illustrated from almost any one of Byron's longer poems.

Wordsworth. *The Excursion, passim;* especially those portions where the general poetic interest is highest, as Books Second and Sixth.

Tennyson. *Maud*, VI. and XX. Is *The Princess, A Medley*, a medley of emotional effects?

On the other hand, note how steadiness and unity of emotional effect are secured with variety of image or incident, or of both, in such poems as Milton's *Comus*, Gray's *Elegy*, Coleridge's *Ancient Mariner*, Shelley's *To a Skylark*, Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes*, Tennyson's *Guinevere*.

Is the harmony of emotional effect in Shakspere's great dramas marred by such passages as *Romeo and Juliet*, Act. IV., sc. 3, *Hamlet*, Act V., sc. 1?

Is the emotional interest sustained in Book Third of Milton's *Paradise Lost?*

P. 97. The Range or Variety of Emotion.

Test the range of Shakspere's powers by enumerating either the distinct types of character exhibited, or the different emotions appealed to, in any one of his great plays, as *Henry IV.;* or, better, in any group of plays containing romance, history, tragedy, and comedy, as: *A Midsummer Night's Dream, Henry IV., As You Like It, Hamlet, Antony and Cleopatra, A Winter's Tale.*

Compare Tennyson and Browning with reference to the range of their emotional power, selecting for such comparison from the works of each poet six poems fairly representing the variety of his work.

From Tennyson: —

The Lotos Eaters, Locksley Hall, In Memoriam, The Princess, Idylls of the King (*The Holy Grail* and *Guinevere*), *The Northern Farmer.*

From Browning: —

Pippa Passes, Saul, Colombe's Birthday, Andrea del Sarto, The Ring and The Book (*Giuseppe Caponsacchi, Pompilia,* and the *Pope*), *Rabbi Ben Ezra.*

William Morris's *Earthly Paradise* affords a good example of the monotony produced in an otherwise very beautiful poem by the lack of variety in motive.

P. 102. The Rank or Quality of Emotion.

Consider the relative rank and literary value of the emotions appealed to by the following poems, each a masterpiece of its kind.

1. Poetry of unusual musical charm.

Swinburne. *The Garden of Proserpine, First Chorus in Atalanta in Calydon, Ave atque Vale.* Compare the last of these poems, which is in memory of Baudelaire, with Arnold's *Thyrsis,* which is in memory of Clough.

2. Vers de Société.

Prior. *To Chloe Jealous — A Better Answer, To a Child of Quality.*

Locker. *To My Grandmother, St. James Street.*

Dobson. *Tu Quoque, Dorothy, Cupid's Alley, Triolets, With Pipe and Flute.*

Bunner. *The Way to Arcady.*

3. Romantic or Æsthetic Poetry.

Coleridge. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner.*

Keats. *The Eve of St. Agnes, Lamia, Hyperion, La Belle Dame sans Merci.*

Morris. *The Earthly Paradise — The Man Born to be King, The Land East of the Sun and West of the Moon, The Watching of the Falcon.*

Contrast the dominant emotion in Keats's poetry with that in Wordsworth's, as suggested by the familiar quotation from either poet: —

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever."

and

"To me the meanest flower can give
Thoughts, that do often lie too deep for tears."

Compare, with reference to the rank of their emotion, Tennyson's *Lady of Shalott* and *The Lotos Eaters* with his *Morte d'Arthur* and *Ulysses*.

Has Tennyson heightened the poetic value of *The Idylls of the King* by emphasizing an ethical intention, by making the poem an allegory, "shadowing sense at war with soul," rather than by treating his theme purely as mediæval and romantic narrative?

If "moral emotion is of higher literary value than purely æsthetic, sensuous emotion," why is not purely ethical poetry of higher rank than any other? *e g.* Pope's *Essay on Man*, Dryden's *Religio Laici*.

P. 111. The Demands of Practical Morality upon Literature.

Johnson says of Shakspere in the famous Introduction to his edition of the "Works," "His first defect is that to which may be imputed most of the evil in books or in men. He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose . . . He makes no just distribution of good or evil, nor is always careful to show in the virtuous a disapprobation of the wicked; he carries his persons indifferently through right and wrong, and, at the close, dismisses them without further care, and leaves their example to operate by chance. This fault the barbarity of the age cannot extenuate; for it is always a writer's duty to make the world better, and justice is a virtue independent on time or place."

Is this criticism just? If not, why not? Consider the moral influence of such a depiction of character as that of Sir Toby Belch, or Cleopatra, or Iago.

CHAPTER FOURTH

The Imagination

I. *The Creative Imagination.*

The Creative Imagination is to be illustrated, not in short passages, but in larger wholes. Consider, *e.g.* in any one of Shakspere's plays the work of the Creative Imagination in (1) creating the persons of the play, (2) combining them in such way as to exhibit the influence of each upon the others, (3) devising an impressive action that shall truthfully illustrate the laws of human conduct.

Compare the Fancy as seen in Shakspere's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* with the Imagination, as seen in *As You Like It.*

Contrast the vividness of Tennyson's imagination as seen in description and scenery, with its feebleness in the creation of character; *e.g.* in *Maud, The Princess, The Idylls of the King.*

Compare Browning with Tennyson in this respect; *e.g.* in *Fra Lippo, Andrea del Sarto, Pippa Passes, The Ring and The Book.*

Consider the vividness of the Creative Imagination in the work of Rudyard Kipling, throughout.

The Associative and the Interpretative forms of Imagination may be illustrated in detail from any of the poetry mentioned on the preceding pages; the following passages may, however, be specified as containing striking or beautiful examples. Of course, the two forms shade into each other, and both will be found in any of the passages cited below; but the references are arranged in groups, as one or the other form seems to predominate.

II. *The Associative Imagination.*

Shakspere. *Sonnets,* Nos. 33, 60, 73.

Milton. *Paradise Lost,* Book I., ll. 520–620; *Comus,* ll. 170–229.

Wordsworth. "*Three years she grew,*" *The Leech Gatherer, Ode to Duty,* "*The world is too much with us.*"

Keats *On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, Ode to a Nightingale, La Belle Dame sans Merci.*

Shelley. *In Lechlade Churchyard, To the Skylark, To Jane — The Recollection.*

Tennyson. *Ulysses,* "*Tears, idle tears,*" *In Memoriam* — §§ 32, 55, 96, 121, *Rizpah, Merlin and the Gleam.*

Browning. *Love Among the Ruins, A Toccata of Galuppi's, Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came, May and Death, The Last Ride Together.*

Emerson. *The Problem.*

Lowell. *The Vision of Sir Launfal — Prelude, Commemoration Ode.*

For examples of the Associative Imagination in reflective or didactic poetry, see Dryden's *Religio Laici,* Pope's *Essay on Man* — Epistle I.

Examples of the Associative Imagination in various types of prose.

1. Florid, emotional.

Jeremy Taylor. "Holy Dying," "Sermon on the Return of Prayers."

2. Controversial, satiric, political.

Swift. "Tale of a Tub," §§ 6, 9; "Examiner," No. 16.

Burke. "A Letter to a Noble Lord."

3. Critical.

Lowell. Essays on "Dante," "Dryden."

4. Historical.

Carlyle. "French Revolution," Vol. II., Book IV, ch. VI.

For the allied form of Fancy.

1. Labored, far-fetched, but sometimes pathetic.

Donne. *A Funeral Elegy, The Relic, The Blossom.*

Herbert. *Sunday, Affliction, Home.*

2. Ingenious or subtle, yet effective.

Emerson. *The Sphinx, The Humble Bee, My Garden.*

Lowell. *On Burning Some Old Letters.*

3. Excessive, remote, or obscure.

Browning. *Another Way of Love, Love in a Life, Women and Roses, St. Martin's Summer, Bad Dreams, Flute Music.*

4. Romantic or graceful.

Shakspere. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Songs in *Twelfth Night* and in *As You Like It.*

Ben Jonson. *To Celia, The Triumph of Charis.*

Herrick. *The Bag of the Bee, To Daffodils, To Meadows, Delight in Disorder, Oberon's Palace.*

Wordsworth. *To the Daisy, To the Small Celandine.*

Keats. *Fancy.*

III. *The Interpretative Imagination.*

Burns. *To a Mountain Daisy, Address to the Deil, Highland Mary, "Open the door to me, O," My Nannie's Awa.*

Wordsworth. *Lines above Tintern Abbey, The Fountain, "Strange fits of passion have I known," "There was a boy," "There is an eminence," The Solitary Reaper, Stepping Westward, Stanzas on Peele Castle, The Prelude* — Book First.

Coleridge. *Frost at Midnight, The Nightingale.*

Shelley. *The Cloud, Ode to the West Wind, Epipsychidion, Mont Blanc, Arethusa, Evening — Ponte a Mare, Pisa.*

Keats. Compare, with reference to the interpretative power of the imagination, his early poems with his later ones, *e.g.* "*I stood tiptoe upon a little hill,*" or *Endymion*, Book I., with the *Ode to a Nightingale* or *Hyperion.*

Byron. Compare the imaginative quality of Byron's

epithets in some of his most famous passages, *e.g. Childe Harold*, Cantos III. and IV., with those of Keats and Shelley.

Tennyson. *Maud*—§§ 1, 3, 14, 17, 18, 22; "*Break, break, break*," *The Lady of Shalott*, *A Dream of Fair Women*, *Idyls of the King*—*Guinevere*, *The Passing of Arthur*.

Browning. *Andrea del Sarto*, *An Epistle of Karshish*, *The Grammarian's Funeral*, *Two in the Campagna*, *Saul*—§ 19.

Arnold. *Resignation*, *Dover Beach*, *A Summer Night*.

Rossetti. *The Portrait*, *My Sister's Sleep*.

Emerson. *The Prelude*, *Woodnotes*.

Ruskin. "Modern Painters," Part VI., chs. IX. and X.

Carlyle. "Life of Sterling," chs. IV. and V.; "Sartor Resartus," Book II., ch. IX.

Compare with the imaginative interpretation of nature as seen in the above passages from Wordsworth, Shelley, Arnold, passages of pure description, *e.g.*—

Thomson. *The Seasons*—*Spring*, ll. 140–184; *Autumn*, ll. 1082–1102, *Winter*, ll. 117–147.

Scott. *Marmion*—Introduction to Canto II., Canto IV., stanza 30; *The Lady of the Lake*, Canto I. §§ 11–13.

The Pathetic Fallacy.

In addition to the examples in the passages cited above from Coleridge, Tennyson, Browning, Arnold, Rossetti, see for a few of the myriad examples in Shakspere, *Romeo* and *Juliet*, Act II., sc. 2; Act III., sc. 5; *Merchant of Venice*, Act V., sc. 1; *As You Like It*, Act II.; *King Lear*, Act III.; *Hamlet*, Act I., sc. 1; Act IV., sc. 7; *Macbeth*, Act I., sc. 5; *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act IV., sc. 14; *A Winter's Tale*, Act IV., sc. 4; *Cymbeline*, Act IV., sc. 2; *The Tempest*, Act IV.

CHAPTER FIFTH

The Intellectual Element in Literature

I. *Fidelity to truth.*

(*a*) In historical writing (p. 148).

Carlyle's "French Revolution." Consider whether the unquestionable emotional power of the work is purchased at the cost of "accuracy and clearness of information."

(*b*) In pure literature (p. 149).

1. Show how any of the poetry or fiction in the preceding lists illustrates the demand for truth, *e.g.* by a study of motive and conduct in any one of Shakspere's plays — *Macbeth, Othello, Hamlet;* or in a novel — Scott's "Old Mortality," Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," George Eliot's "Adam Bede."

2. In the following great elegiac poems show that the value and rank of the poetry depends not so much upon the expression of personal grief as upon the thought which underlies the grief, or the truth the grief discloses: —

Shelley's *Adonais*, Arnold's *Thyrsis*, Tennyson's *In Memoriam*, Emerson's *Threnody*.

Compare with these poems, in this regard, Swinburne's *Ave atque Vale.*

3. Examine the thought or truth which forms the basis of each of the following poems: —

Tennyson. *The Palace of Art*, *The Two Voices*, *Ulysses.*

Browning. *Andrea del Sarto*, *The Epistle of Karshish*, *A Grammarian's Funeral*, *The Statue and the Bust.*

Arnold. *Dover Beach*, *The Future*, *Resignation*, *Stanzas from the Grande Chartreuse.*

4. The pure lyric is the expression of feeling rather

than of truth; but compare, with reference to their content of definite thought, the lyrics of Wordsworth with those of Shelley.

5. Thought over-subtle, recondite, obscure (p. 151).

Browning. *Pauline, Epilogue to Dramatis Personæ, Numpholeptos, Fifine at the Fair, Ferishtah's Fancies, Parleyings with Certain People — Francis Furini.*

6. Intellectual basis of the work, fanciful, doubtful, unsound, partial, or in some way incorrect or false (p. 152).

Pope. *Essay on Man.*

Wordsworth. *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.*

Byron. *Childe Harold,* especially Cantos I., II., III.; *The Corsair, Lara, Manfred, Cain.*

Shelley. *Prometheus Unbound, Hellas.*

Tennyson. *Maud.*

Swinburne. *The Garden of Proserpine.*

Hardy. "Tess of the D'Urbervilles."

II. *Fidelity to Fact.* — Realism, Romanticism, Idealism. (pp. 166–181).

(*a*) Realism. For various forms and degrees of realism in treatment, combined with less or more of idealism in spirit, see —

1. In prose fiction.

Zola's "Lourdes," Tolstoï's "Anna Karenina," Balzac's "Pere Goriot," Fielding's "Tom Jones," Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," Howells's "The Rise of Silas Lapham," James's "The Portrait of a Lady," Miss Wilkins's "A New England Nun," Kipling's "Soldiers Three."

2. In poetry.

Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* — Prologue and connecting passages; Burns's *The Twa Dogs, To His Auld Mare Maggie, Halloween, Epistle to Davie;* Crabbe's *Village;* Wordsworth's *The Thorn, The Brothers, Michael, Lucy*

Gray, The Excursion, Book VI.; Kipling's *Barrack Room Ballads, McAndrew's Hymn, The Mary Gloster.*

(*b*) Romanticism. For examples of romantic manner, with less or more of fidelity to truth of life, see —

1. In prose fiction: —

Scott's "Ivanhoe," "The Talisman," "Old Mortality"; Kingsley's "Westward Ho"; Stevenson's "David Balfour."

2. In poetry.

Shakspere's *A Midsummer Night's Dream, The Tempest;* Spenser's *Faerie Queene;* Southey's *Thalaba;* Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner;* Keats's *Eve of St. Agnes;* Tennyson's *Princess;* Browning's *Childe Roland to the Dark Tower Came, The Flight of the Duchess;* Morris's *The Earthly Paradise;* Rossetti's *The Bride's Prelude, The King's Tragedy.*

(*c*) Note how the characteristics of realism, romanticism, and idealism are combined in such works as the following: —

Shakspere's *As You Like It, Othello, Winter's Tale,* Scott's *Marmion, Lady of the Lake;* Byron's *Childe Harold,* Cantos III. and IV.; Browning's *Pippa Passes, Colombe's Birthday, The Ring and The Book;* Tennyson's *Idyls of the King;* Lowell's *Vision of Sir Launfal;* Scott's "Heart of Midlothian," "Quentin Durward"; Thackeray's "Henry Esmond"; Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter," "Marble Faun"; George Eliot's "Adam Bede," "Romola."

CHAPTER SIXTH

The Formal Element in Literature

P. 193. For examples of the disparity between feeling and form in Browning, see not only poems like *Pauline, Love in a Life, Another Way of Love, Numpholeptos, Fifine at the Fair, Rephan,* but also short passages in his best

works, as *Saul, In a Year, In a Balcony, A Death in the Desert, Lyric Love* (closing lines of the first section of *The Ring and The Book*).

P. 194. For characteristic specimens of Macaulay's energy, see his essays on "Milton," "Boswell's Johnson," "Chatham"; "History of England," chs. VI., VII., X.

For other examples of energy without delicacy or temperance, see Carlyle's "Past and Present," Book I., chs. I.–V., XV., "Latter Day Pamphlets," 1, 6, 8; Ruskin's "Crown of Wild Olive," Introduction, "Fors Clavigera," Letters 3, 4, 5.

For characteristic specimens of Pater's delicacy, see his "The Child in the House," "Diaphaneitè," "Marius the Epicurean," especially Parts I. and III.

P. 197. For the style of Addison and Swift, see —

Addison. "The Sir Roger de Coverley Papers" ("Spectator," Nos. 106, 112, 122, 269, 329, 335), "On the Opera" ("Spectator," 13), "Party Patches" ("Spectator," 81), "A Lady's Library" ("Spectator," 37), "Ned Softly" ("Tatler," 163), "On Taste" ("Spectator," 409).

Swift. "The Examiner," Nos. 13, 16; "Letter to a Young Clergyman"; "Tale of a Tub," §§ 2, 4, 6; "Drapier's Letters," Nos. 1, 4.

P. 199. For examples of "ease" in style, see the passages from Addison above cited; also, Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers," "Henry Esmond," "English Humourists."

P. 200. Naturalness, simplicity.

Burns. *Auld Lang Syne, Bonnie Doon, Tam Glen, To a Louse, The Twa Dogs.*

Wordsworth. *Michael, The Fountain, The Reverie of Poor Susan, The Brothers, The Story of Margaret* (*Excursion*, Book I., ll. 511–916).

Compare with the simplicity of these poems the studied simplicity of Tennyson's *Dora;* or, with Wordsworth's *Michael*, the ornate treatment of a similar homely theme in Tennyson's *Enoch Arden.*

Compare with these examples of simplicity of treatment of homely themes, the dignified simplicity of treatment of an heroic theme in Arnold's *Sohrab and Rustum.*

P. 203. Examples of the lack of artistic form, — definite outline or conception as a whole.

Spenser's *Faerie Queene;* Wordsworth's *Excursion*, or any one of its books; Keats's *Endymion.*

P. 204. Consider the ways in which various motives and different series of actions are so combined and subordinated as to produce unity of total effect in Shakspere's *Merchant of Venice, Henry IV., As You Like It, King Lear.*

P. 207. Consider whether these famous shorter poems are in any respects open to criticism for lack of either completeness, method, or harmony: —

Milton's *Lycidas;* Collins's *Ode to Evening;* Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night;* Wordsworth's *Simon Lee;* Coleridge's *Christabel;* Keats's *Ode to a Grecian Urn;* Tennyson's *Maud;* Browning's *Old Pictures in Florence, By a Fireside, One Word More;* Arnold's *Tristam and Iseult.*

As examples of unity — completeness, method, and harmony — in various forms of prose, see —

Addison. "Reflections in Westminster Abbey" ("Spectator," 26).

Burke. "Letter to a Noble Lord."

Lamb. "Dream Children."

Hazlitt. "Of Persons One would wish to have Known."

Carlyle. "Essay on Diderot," "Coleridge" ("Life of Sterling," ch. VIII.).

Ruskin. "Lecture on Work" ("Crown of Wild Olive"), "The Relation of Art to Morals" ("Lectures on Art").

Arnold. "Essay on Falkland," "Lecture on Emerson."

Newman. "The Danger of Accomplishments," "The Invisible World," "Unreal Words" ("Plain and Parochial Sermons").

Thackeray. "De Finibus" ("Roundabout Papers").

Lowell. "On a Certain Condescension in Foreigners."

Lincoln. "Gettysburg Address."

P. 208. Where is the point of emotional climax in Shakspere's *Romeo and Juliet? Hamlet? King Lear?* In Browning's *Saul?*

P. 210. Note the harmony of time, scene, atmosphere, with the action in Shakspere's *Hamlet, King Lear, Macbeth, Merchant of Venice*

Note the adaptation of metrical form to sentiment in the following poems.—

Milton's *L'Allegro, Il Penseroso;* Ben Jonson's *"It is not growing like a Tree";* Herrick's *Daffodils;* Dryden's *Ode on St. Cecilia's Day;* Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard;* Wordsworth's *Highland Reaper;* Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind, The Sensitive Plant;* Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale, On First looking into Chapman's Homer;* Tennyson's *The Lotos Eaters,* Songs in *The Princess, Morte d'Arthur, Merlin and the Gleam;* Browning's *Saul, Love Among the Ruins, James Lee's Wife;* Swinburne's *By the North Sea.*

CHAPTER SEVENTH

Poetry

P. 240. The Diction of Poetry. The "poetic diction" of the eighteenth century to which Wordsworth objected, may be seen in such passages as the following:—

Pope. *Windsor Forest*, ll. 135–164; *Essay on Man*, Book I., ll. 207–246.

Thomson. *The Seasons, Spring*, ll. 1–48, 136–220; *Summer*, ll. 81–139, 1093–1144.

Young. *Night Thoughts, Night First*, ll. 78–106; *Night Second*, ll. 623–707.

Gray. *On a Distant Prospect of Eton College*, stanzas 6–10; *Sonnet on the Death of Richard West.*

Akenside. *The Pleasures of Imagination*, Book I., ll. 1–30, 438–566.

Johnson. *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, ll. 1–20.

P. 243. "Poetry is entirely, prose only in part, the utterance of emotion." Is this statement contradicted or confirmed by such passages as the following: —

Wordsworth's *Excursion*, Book IV., ll. 197–227, Book V., ll. 309–330, 485–529.

Browning's *La Saisiaz*, *Ferishtah's Fancies — A Bean Stripe.*

Pp. 253–257. Quantity and Accent.

Examples of vigor and grace of movement, or of special adaptation of movement to sentiment, secured by changes in the number of syllables within feet of the same length, or by shifting the accent, may be found in any verse at all flexible; a few noteworthy passages are mentioned here.

Shakspere. *Midsummer Night's Dream*, Act II., sc. 1, ll. 150–174, 259–269; *I Henry IV.*, Act I., sc. 3; *As You Like It*, Act II., sc. 1, ll. 1–18; *Hamlet*, Act III., sc. 1; *Othello*, Act I., sc. 3, ll. 76–170; *Antony and Cleopatra*, Act IV., sc. 14, ll. 1–54, Act IV., sc. 15, ll. 72–91; *A Winter's Tale*, Act III., sc. 2, ll. 20–113, Act IV., sc. 4, ll. 110–146; Songs in *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *The Tempest.*

Milton. *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Comus*, especially such lines as 8, 125–143, 976–1023.

Coleridge. *Christabel.*

Wordsworth. *Ode on the Intimations of Immortality.*

Shelley. *Alastor, Ode to the West Wind, The Cloud, Ozymandias, With a Guitar, To Jane, "Swiftly walk over the western wave," "O world, O life, O time," "Rarely comest thou," "Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me."*

Tennyson. *The Lady of Shalott, The Lotos Eaters, Ulysses,* ll. 54–58, *"Break, break, break," The Princess — Prologue,* ll. 20–25; I., ll. 86, 97–99, 165–166, 216; II., ll. 169–172, 357, 451–452; III., ll. 8, 271–275, 338–347; IV., ll. 160–162, 461, 501–505; V., ll. 336–340, 490–494, 512–518, 530–531; VII., ll. 200–208, 210–215, and many other similar lines throughout; *Maud* and *The Idyls of the King, passim; Merlin and the Gleam.*

Browning. *Love Among the Ruins, A Toccata of Galuppi's, In a Gondola, James Lee's Wife.* Browning's blank verse is remarkably free and flexible; examples of the variation of movement to suit the sentiment may be found in any twenty lines of *Andrea del Sarto, Fra Lippo Lippi, In a Balcony, The Ring and The Book.*

Arnold. The verse of Arnold, more largely perhaps than that of any other modern English poet, disregards conventional metrical forms, and illustrates subtle effects of quantity; see, for example, *The Strayed Reveller, Sohrab and Rustum* — last fifteen lines, *Dover Beach, Bacchanalia, The Youth of Nature, The Youth of Man, The Future, Rugby Chapel.*

Pp. 259–262. Pitch and Melody.

The passages cited on the last two pages from Shakspere, Milton, Shelley, Tennyson, Arnold, and Swinburne are excellent examples of melody. For other and varied examples see —

Shakspere. *Sonnets* 15, 29, 30, 33, 60, 66, 71, 73.

Milton. *Ode on the Nativity; Comus,* ll. 1–18, 249–270, 890–920; *Paradise Lost,* Book I, ll. 283–330, 520–620, Book IV., ll. 131–171, 589–608, 640–656.

Spenser. *Faerie Queene*, Book I., Canto I., stanza 40, Book II., Canto VI., stanzas 10–13, Canto XII., stanzas 30–33.

Herrick. *To Meadows, To Violets.*

Burns. "*Open the door to me, O,*" *My Nannie's Awa, The Braes o' Ballochmyle, Highland Mary, The Banks o' Doon.*

Coleridge. *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ll. 357–372, 460–480; *Kubla Khan.*

Byron. *Childe Harold*, Canto III., stanzas 87–90, 101, Canto IV., stanzas 79–82, 178–189.

Keats. *La Belle Dame sans Merci.*

Shelley. "*My soul is an enchanted boat*" (*Prometheus Unbound*, Act III.), *The Skylark, Arethusa,* "*Music when soft voices die.*"

Tennyson. "*Break, break, break*"; Songs in *The Princess; In Memoriam*, 11, 15, 32, 67, 86, 121; *Maud*, "*Come into the garden, Maud*"; *Crossing the Bar.*

Clough. *The Stream of Life, Dipsychus* — sc. ii., *In a Gondola.*

Swinburne. *Atalanta in Calydon*, first chorus; *The Garden of Proserpine, A Forsaken Garden, March.*

Morris. *The Wind, Summer Dawn, The Half of Life Gone, The Plaint of the Wood Sun* ("House of the Wolfings," XVII.).

Rossetti. *The Blessed Damosel, A New Year's Burden, Cloud Confines.*

P. 266. Compare, with respect to movement, melody, division into phrases and paragraphs, the blank verse of Wordsworth, Tennyson, Browning.

Pp. 268–269. The effects of Alliteration and Assonance may be studied in any of the passages just cited as examples of melody, and in those cited (p. 333) as examples of the adaptation of metre to sentiment; espe-

cially, in both lists, those from Shakspere, Milton, Coleridge, Tennyson, Swinburne.

Note especially the musical effect of the vowels in the verse of Milton and Tennyson, the preference of both poets for the open vowels, and the characteristic effects each poet secures by their use. Note, however, the difference in their choice of consonants, — Tennyson's preference for liquids and labials, for the softer and more delaying consonantal sounds.

Consider whether in Swinburne's verse alliteration and assonance — especially the former — are not overworked, and sometimes secured only at some expense of meaning.

On the other hand, note the appropriateness of such devices in the more artificial and dainty forms of verse. Very charming and very skillful instances may be seen, *e.g.*, in Dobson's *With Pipe and Flute*, *To a Greek Girl*, *With a Copy of Theocritus*.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

Prose Fiction

P. 288. For a statement of these objections to the element of plot in fiction, see Howells's "Criticism and Fiction," chs. IV., XX., XXI.

P. 289. For examples of the charm of narrative, more or less romantic, but in every case illustrative of character and life, see —

Scott's "Old Mortality," "The Talisman"; Thackeray's "Henry Esmond"; Hawthorne's "Marble Faun"; Stevenson's "David Balfour," "The Master of Ballantrae"; Crawford's "Saracinesca," "A Roman Singer"; Hardy's "The Return of the Native"; Barrie's "The Little Minister."

Consider, on the other hand, whether the following

novels do not suffer for lack of the interest in plot,— a story with definite progress and outcome.

James's "Washington Square," "The Europeans," "A Portrait of a Lady," "The Awkward Age"; Howells's "A Modern Instance," "The Rise of Silas Lapham"; Allen's (James Lane), "The Choir Invisible."

P. 290. "The value of a novel will depend . . . upon the amount and the rank of the life it can portray."

Consider the relative value, measured by this standard, of such different types of the novel as —

Scott's "Old Mortality," "Heart of Midlothian"; Thackeray's "Vanity Fair," "The Newcomes"; Hawthorne's "The House of Seven Gables," "The Scarlet Letter"; Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," "Mansfield Park"; Howells's "A Modern Instance," "The Rise of Silas Lapham."

Pp. 294–296. Compare the different ways of using the *motive of love in the following novels:*—

Scott's "Old Mortality"; Thackeray's "The Newcomes"; George Eliot's "Adam Bede"; Meredith's "Richard Feverel"; Hawthorne's "Scarlet Letter"; Hardy's "Tess of the D'Urbervilles"; Caine's "The Manxman."

In the last two novels, notice the type of character in the heroine made necessary by the treatment of the central motive. For the same result in an earlier novel, see Richardson's "Pamela."

The later novels of Hardy and Caine will also illustrate the note of depression, of pessimistic fatalism, in much of modern fiction.

Pp. 303–305. For examples of an objective manner of treatment, dramatic vividness of presentation, swiftness and directness of movement, see —

Defoe's "Robinson Crusoe"; Scott's "The Talisman"; Stevenson's "David Balfour," "The Master of Ballantrae"; Crawford's "Saracinesca," "A Roman Singer"; Kipling's "Soldiers Three," "Plain Tales from the Hills," "Captains Courageous."

Pp. 309. For the qualities here described — breadth, lifelikeness, sense of reality — there are few novels superior to Thackeray's "Vanity Fair" and "The Newcomes." For the same sense of reality and familiar acquaintance with the persons of the story, but in a narrower circle of interests and with less emotional power, see Jane Austen's "Pride and Prejudice," "Mansfield Park."

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Herrick, Robert, 1591–1674. The Bag of the Bee, To Daffodils, To Meadows, Delight in Disorder, Oberon's Palace.

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Wordsworth, William, 1770–1850. The Thorn, Lines above Tintern Abbey, Alice Fell, The Idiot Boy, The Reverie of Poor Susan, Simon Lee, "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "Strange fits of passion I have known," "Three years she grew," Lucy Gray, Michael, The Brothers, The Leech Gatherer, The Fountain, To the Daisy, To the Small Celandine, "There is an eminence," Stanzas on Peele Castle, "There was a boy," The Highland Reaper,

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Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 1788–1824. Childe Harold, *The Corsair, Lara, Manfred, Cain,* "*On this day I* complete my thirty-sixth year."

Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 1792–1822. Alastor, To Mont Blanc, In Lechlade Churchyard, To the West Wind, The Cloud, The Skylark, The Sensitive Plant, Lines Written in Dejection near Naples, The Cenci, Prometheus Unbound, Arethusa, Ozymandias, Adonais, Epipsychidion, Evening — Ponte a Mare, To Jane — The Recollection, Hellas, "Rarely, rarely comest thou, Spirit of Delight," "Madonna, wherefore hast thou sent to me?" "Music when soft voices die," "O world, O life, O time."

Keats, John, 1795–1821. "I stood tiptoe upon a little hill," On First Looking into Chapman's Homer, Endymion, Book I., Lamia, The Eve of St. Agnes, Ode to a Nightingale, Ode to a Grecian Urn, Fancy, Hyperion, La Belle Dame sans Merci.

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